

Preserving Memories

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

BOB VEITCH, Mile End Fuel Supplies

‘DUE TO THE ERA AND THE DEMAND, MILE END FUEL SUPPLIES WAS THE LARGEST AND MOST SUCCESSFUL FUEL SUPPLY BUSINESS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA.’

Located on land of the Mile End Railyards, the Mile End Fuel Supply Company was registered in June 1961 by Bob’s dad, Robert Veitch. Prior to this the Woodyard belonged to Josiah Thomas and wood was carted by horse and dray.

Mile End Fuel Supplies provided Government House with coke and firewood; and bakeries, hospitals, businesses and everyday people with wood for cooking and heating. With the advent of homes and businesses using gas and electricity, the demand for wood drastically reduced.



Around 1971 the business focus changed to transport and serviced the wider South Australian community.

Bob tells of his family’s involvement in the company and the business changes over the years.

In his personal life, Bob experienced some health challenges but went on to achieve a variety of personal and charitable goals.

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Veitch family background

The Veitch name comes from Peebles in Scotland.

Robert Andrew Veitch, with his wife Margaret and seven of their children left Liverpool on 31 October 1858 on board the *North*, arriving at Port Adelaide on 28 January 1859.

The family were stonemasons and builders who lived in the Kent Town area.

In November 1877, in Adelaide, their youngest child, Thomas Brown Veitch married Margaret Andrews, also Scottish, from the Shetland Islands. (Margaret arrived in Port Adelaide in 1866 on board the *Canterbury*).

KENT TOWN.	
Schottelius, Ernest H, storeman	Veitch, Thomas, mason
Watson, Mrs James	Chappell, Herbert, bookkeeper
Köerner, Frederick, cabinetmaker	Osborne, Samuel
Simon, Mrs Catherine	Read, Mrs Mary

Sands and McDougall directory, 1890

Thomas and Margaret had nine children. Their ninth child, Robert Hedley Hamilton Veitch married Alma Blott on 27 January 1919. Their third child Robert John was born 26 May 1930 at Rumont, Unley Park. This was a private hospital at 390 Unley Road, Unley Park.

VEITCH.—At Rumont. Unley-road, to the wife of Robert Veitch—a son. No visitors for seven days.

Advertiser 28 May 1930, p14

Through the Melville's, family friends, Robert John Veitch met Helen Lemmey and they married in May 1951. They first lived in Upper Sturt.

- **Robert (Bob) Dawson was born 2 November 1951 also at Rumont, Unley Park;**
- Peter Desmond was born 7 November 1953, at Queen Victoria Hospital; and
- Gloria Leslie was born 3 June 1955, at Parkside.

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Robert and Helen Veitch

When Mum and Dad married, they lived on Olave Hill Road at Upper Sturt.

My parents, and my Uncle Bully (Frank), lived close to each other, and my grandmother Lemmey lived in a house at the back of them. It was a real little village.

Dad had three jobs when he first got married. Mum and Dad worked like crazy when they were younger.

Grandpa Lemmey, Alfred, known as Dick was a woodcutter. Dad worked for him and bought an old Dodge and started carting and delivering wood to all the bakeries around town. Dad also drove for J.C. Benbow at Crafers.



Dad was also a Speedway rider on solo motorbikes at Kilburn, then Rowley Park. Mum told him he had to give that up, she said "He would've hit the wall."

My mum and Grandma Veitch didn't get on too well, so after a short time Dad rented a house near the Upper Sturt shops. They then built a house near there. Other family members lived in the area and I can remember all the cousins got on well and we had a ball.

When I was about eight we moved to 3 Brook Street, Torrens Park into an old house with a double block. It was an old quarry house. We also lived at 18 Brook Street. I've lived ever since at Torrens Park.

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Siblings

Gloria Leslie Veitch (1955-) *She has an intellectual disability and from the early sixties she lived in Minda Home. Mum and Dad would bring her home on weekends every fortnight and they took her half way around the world on their holidays. When she was older, she moved to Craighburn at Blackwood. She worked there looking after the fowls, the cattle, and the nursery. She worked every day; they loved her. All the people there were good, honest workers and they would work day and night, rain, hail or whatever. She lived at Craighburn for about 30 years and the steep driveways up there caused a hip problem. I was so scared she was going to fall over and break something. She eventually had a hip replacement.*

Gloria married one of her mates, Phillip, and they recently moved back into Minda Home. They have a two-bedroom apartment on the ground floor with a front and back garden which is just ideal for them.

Peter Desmond Veitch (1953 - 2022). *Peter was known as Bones, he also worked for Dad for a long time, doing the country runs in the transport business.*



Gloria and Bob, 2022



Peter Veitch

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Bob's school years

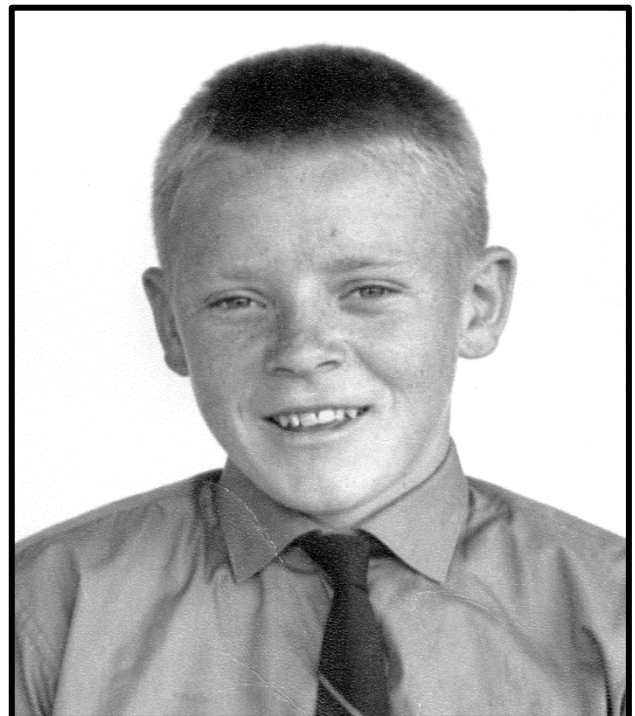
I went to Upper Sturt Primary where there was one classroom with one teacher for all the grades one through to seven. There were about 40 kids, Joe Fulwood was the teacher. The big kids were up the back and the little kids sat down the front.

When we lived at Torrens Park, I went to Mitcham Primary School on Unley Road, next to the railway station. I went there for about half a year. I went to Mitcham Demonstration School for a year in 1960, and then when Clapham opened, I was in the first intake into Clapham, so in about five years, I went to four different schools.

I went to Urrbrae for my secondary schooling.



Urrbrae, 1966



Urrbrae, 1967

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I wasn't academic so I really enjoyed doing the Farm Mechanics at school.

I was always making something, and I remember I made a tyre changer for Dad. I used it all the time when I was working at Mile End with him.



I learnt to drive a tractor and learnt about beekeeping. I've still got bees now, and some poultry.

I had a cousin that went to Unley High where they learnt French, but I wasn't interested in that. Urrbrae was where my dad went, and my brother and I went there as well.

When I was growing up, I played footy, Aussie Rules, at Mitcham. I also went to gymnasium at the Mitcham Youth Centre.

I didn't finish my Intermediate, I left school and went to work with Dad.

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After school

I worked with my Dad and played football. That's how I spent most of my time.

When we had occasional weekends off, my brother and I, and the two Bennett boys who lived around the corner, we'd go away driving somewhere. We'd go up to Laura to see another lad I went to school with, Bruce Wallace, or we'd go down the south somewhere and go shooting.

I do remember going to the Wonderland Ballroom when I was a young lad to learn dancing. I remember treading all over the instructor's feet. When they knocked the ballroom down, they built a medical centre and it's now a doctor's clinic.



The Wonderland Ballroom, 126 Belair Rd, Hawthorne, 2021 [realcommercial.com.au/for-sale]

I had ideas that I wanted to be a surveyor or a plumber but at the age of 17, I decided I wanted to learn to fly and become a pilot. I did about eight to ten hours and I was due to fly solo, but I didn't do it. I pulled out. I don't know what caused it, whether I got nervous or whether I enjoyed footy and chasing girls more.

Dad had said to me, "You get your pilot's licence, I'll pay for it, and you pay me back." I wish I'd kept it up, it's so easy to fly everywhere now.

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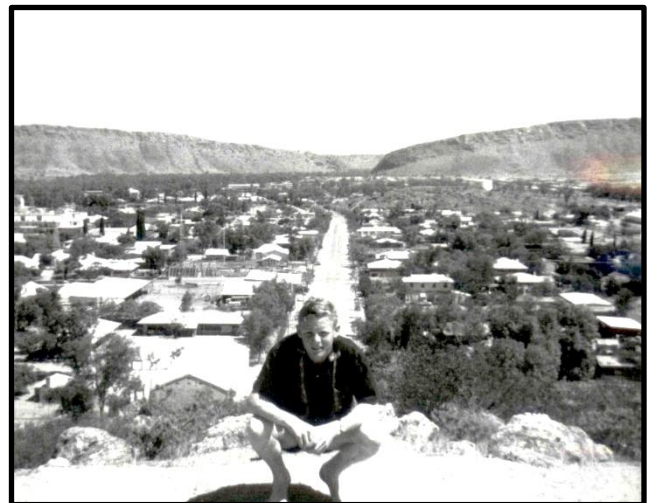
Soon after that I told Dad that I wanted to look around Australia. This was around 1969.

He put six-ply tyres on my van and off I went. I headed up north and got to Kingoonya and I went to the pub. I was a non-drinker, but it was the only thing that was open. This bloke in the pub asked me all these questions, I just thought he was a nosey bloke.

He then said, "I'm the town copper and there's a bloke up the other end of town who wants to go through to Alice Springs. I've checked him out and he's okay. Could you take him with you? And when you get to Alice Springs, you go to the police station, and they'll send a message back to me." I said "Oh... okay, I'll take him." And I did. He came with me to Alice.

When I got to Alice Springs, I got a job with Golden North, delivering milk, ice creams and all the dairy products that Golden North made. It was a great job.

I had an auntie and uncle who lived up there. My uncle was Bill Musgraves, and he was in charge of the railways up there at the time.



Alice Springs, 1969

They had six children, Greg, Stephen, Judy and Sue, and two other children, I can't remember their names. I lived with them while I worked at Golden North.

I went to Sydney, and then Canberra, where I worked as a labourer for my oldest cousin who's an electrician, then I went to Melbourne before coming back home.

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Fuel Supplies businesses

Mitcham

In 1958 Dad bought Mitcham Fuel Supply in the railway yards at Mitcham. I think he got help from his mum, she was a pretty astute lady. I started working there with my mum and Grandpa Veitch.



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The Mitcham railyards was also where T.J. Richards started his coach building business and there was a depot for Mount Gambier stone deliveries.



Mitcham Railway Station [City of Mitcham]



Advertiser, 18 Apr 1951, p4

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Thomas's Woodyard Mile End

Around 1960, my father found out that Josiah Thomas wanted to sell his woodyard at the Mile End railyards.

Josiah Thomas started the business in 1913. As you come out of Adelaide, heading west over the Hilton Bridge which goes over the rail yards, you took the first ramp on your right, and the woodyard was just there. I don't know a lot about its early history, I just know he sold a lot of wood. Heaps of Mallee roots from anywhere in the Murray Mallee district around Karoonda, and near Morgan.

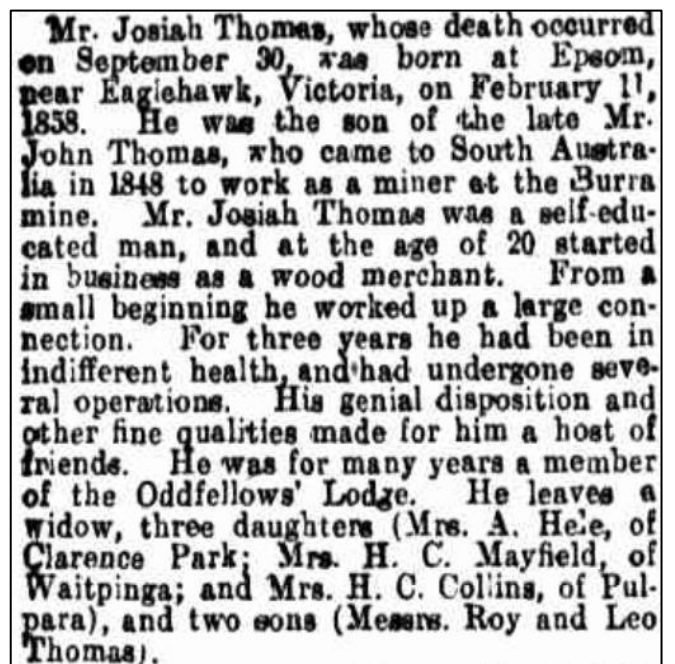
Josiah Thomas Background

Josiah was born in February 1858 at Epsom (near Eaglehawk) Victoria; he married Matilda Nancy née Hewish (1866-1949) in July 1884 at St Luke's Church, Adelaide.

Their children were:

1. Ethel May Thomas (1886-1970)
2. Amy Ann Thomas (1887-1970)
3. Ida Elizabeth Thomas (1892-1919)
4. Roy Thomas (1893-1980)
5. Leo Thomas (1896-1965).

Josiah died in September 1918 at Miss Hand's private hospital, Hutt Street, Adelaide.



Mr. Josiah Thomas, whose death occurred on September 30, was born at Epsom, near Eaglehawk, Victoria, on February 11, 1858. He was the son of the late Mr. John Thomas, who came to South Australia in 1848 to work as a miner at the Burra mine. Mr. Josiah Thomas was a self-educated man, and at the age of 20 started in business as a wood merchant. From a small beginning he worked up a large connection. For three years he had been in indifferent health, and had undergone several operations. His genial disposition and other fine qualities made for him a host of friends. He was for many years a member of the Oddfellows' Lodge. He leaves a widow, three daughters (Mrs. A. Hele, of Clarence Park; Mrs. H. C. Mayfield, of Waitpinga; and Mrs. H. C. Collins, of Pulpara), and two sons (Messrs. Roy and Leo Thomas).

Chronicle, 12 October 1918, p 40

Josiah Thomas began his wholesale and retail wood and fuel business at Mile End in early August 1913; it was based in the recently constructed Mile End railway yards.

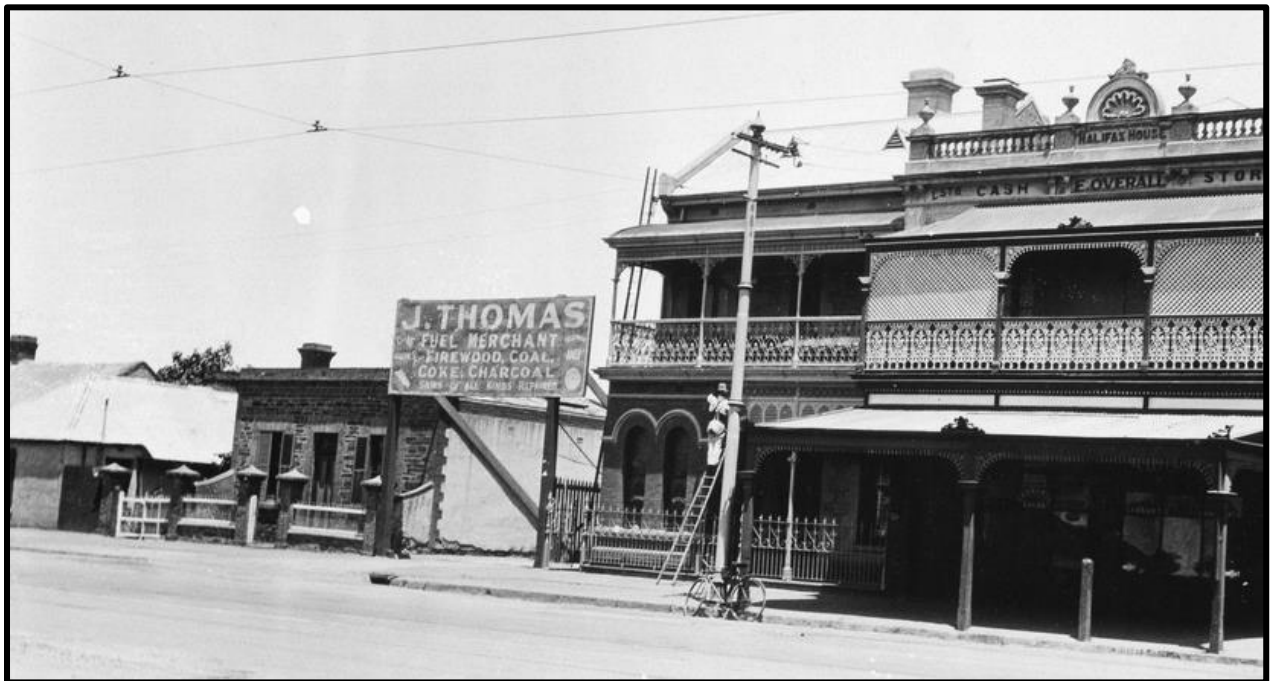
Using today's street names, the depot was on the eastern side of James Congdon Drive, near its intersection with Railway Terrace.

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Immediately prior to opening the Mile End business Thomas had a woodyard at South Road, Edwardstown. He had been in the wood selling business since 1878. In 1910 he was president of the Adelaide and Suburban Fuel Merchants' Association.

Thomas and his family lived in premises at 15 Brown Street, Adelaide, which he had rented since 1892 (and later bought) as an office, and wood and fuel depot. Brown Street was later renamed as the southern half of Morphett Street.



An entrance to J. Thomas Fuel Merchant's Yard next to Halifax House, on Brown Street running off Grote Street, 1927 [SLSA B 3229]

Thomas himself never worked in the Mile End fuel depot. He ran the business by phone from his home.

In its early years Thomas's Mile End business was known as the 'Railway Woodyard'. An early Sands and McDougall directory describes Thomas's business as: '*Josiah Thomas, Wholesale and Retail Fuel Merchant, Firewood, Coal, Coke and Charcoal*'. The materials were used mainly for domestic heating.

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When the depot was opened in 1913 Thomas paid the South Australian Railways Commissioner, the owner of the land, £30 per year in rent. When an access road to the depot (an extension of Railway Terrace) was built a short time later, the rent rose to £50 per year.

In 1914 Thomas's yard employed ten workers during winter and about five in summer. The yard was essentially a distribution point. Employees with drays would arrive at the depot at around 8 am. Using elevator machinery, they could load the drays with a ton of wood in around five minutes. This was then either sold directly to consumers or distributed to suburban depots.

As early as 1914 Thomas was considered by one rival to be 'the recognised king of the trade'.

In the early decades of the twentieth century much of the wood used in Adelaide came from the areas of Loxton, Waikerie and other townships in the Riverland and Murray Mallee. In winter around three times as much wood was used in Adelaide as in summer.

CHEAP FIREWOOD			
JOSIAH THOMAS, Mile-End; and at 15, Brown-street, Adelaide. Best Dry Cut Firewood, delivered city or suburbs.			
	Ton.	½-Ton.	
CUT MALLEE	31/-	16/6	
SHEAOAK	29/6	15/9	
MIXED GUM	27/-	14/6	
MALLEE ROOTS	26/6	14/3	
Mallee Roots 5/- per ton less taking delivery at Mile-End.			
Telephone—Mile-End, 5186; Brown-street, 1161. m1360wv:128			

Advertiser, 25 Jan 1919, p7

The main woods used in the 1920s were Mallee, Mallee root, pink, blue and mountain gum and Sheoak. It required about sixty men cutting in the summer months to supply the Mile End depot with the wood it would sell during winter (although sometimes farmers themselves cut the wood, depending upon how well their crop season had gone).

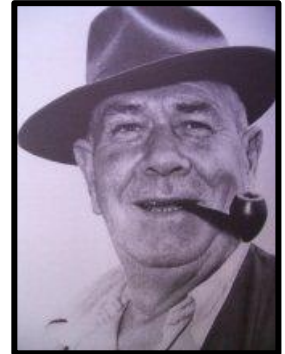
The timing of the opening of Thomas's Mile End wood depot in mid-1913 was dictated by the fact that the first Murray Mallee/Riverland railway, based in Barmera, had opened in January 1913. Over the next few years several other rail lines opened in the area – to Paringa in October 1913, to Loxton in February 1914 and to Waikerie in December 1914.

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Rail was the cheapest method of transporting wood to Adelaide, so the location of Thomas's depot in the rail yards offered clear cost advantages.

E.W. Bartel was the manager of the Mile End depot in its earliest years, but he was soon replaced by Thomas's sons, first Roy, then Leo. Even after Josiah's death in 1918 the business was still known by his name.



Leo Thomas [myheritage.com]

Leo Thomas was the sole manager of the depot in its later years.

South Australian artist Herbert Page Barringer (1886-1946), who worked mainly in the 1920s and 1930s, painted a work called 'Thomas' Wood Yard'.

<p>Display Of Late Artist's Work By ELIZABETH YOUNG From today until April 17 in the Royal Society of Arts Gallery, North terrace, an exhibition of the work of the late Herbert Barringer, for many years a fellow of the society, will be on exhibition. It includes watercolors, tempera, monochromes, and drawings in conte, crayon and pencil. Herbert Barringer, who studied at the SA School of Arts and went abroad for further work and study, was for a time teacher of drawing at the School of Mines. The interest of his work lies chiefly in its draughtsmanship and some of the most pleasing of the sketches exhibited are to be found among the mono-</p>	<p>chromes and drawings. His color tends to be insipid and characterless, and possibly for this reason, the very medium supplying body to the work, the most arresting pictures are the two in tempera, particularly "The Mountain Pool" with its mood of brooding isolation. Among the watercolors we must admire the accomplished drawing of "Pont Allier, Langeac, France" (a rather awkward composition); the almost tentative delicacy of "Yantaranga," an early work; the atmospheric quality of "Thomas' Wood Yard," and the clear washes of "Backs of Houses." In his many studies and sketches of gum trees Herbert Barringer was an obvious admirer of Heyson, and though lacking that artist's mastery and feeling for composition, was always a conscientious draughtsman.</p>
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Advertiser 6 April 1954, p8

By the early 1920s the Mile End depot was clearly the largest business of its kind in Adelaide.

In 1915 there had been about 120 wood and fuel yards around Adelaide and suburbs. By April 1921 Roy Thomas said his yard supplied around 60,000 tons of the 160,000 tons of wood required annually in the Adelaide metropolitan area.

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Diggers' Gazette (South Australia branch) Vol. 2, no. 11, 21 April 1921 [nla.gov.au]

By the mid-1920s, and the demise of less efficient businesses, Adelaide had around sixty mainly small wood and fuel depots. In 1928 one writer described Josiah Thomas as 'the Mile End Wood King'.

Handling Freight of State

ACTIVITY AT MILE-END

Work of South Australian Railways

GROWTH OF GREAT ORGANISATION

Twenty years ago the railway goods and livestock for Adelaide were handled at North terrace, west of the present passenger station, but owing to the cramped position and consequent delays the Government of the day purchased land at Mile-End for a freight yard.

In 1909 the first freight was handled at Mile-End. Firewood, sandstone, and other commodities followed at intervals until in 1913 the whole of the freight traffic was handled there.

Approaching Mile-End yard from the north a visitor observes the public coal and sand staiths, which comprise an elevated stretch of railway line 700 ft. long, the land below being divided into 35 bays of 20 ft. each, from which the lessees retail their commodities.

Next is the up-to-date woodyard in the State, of J. Thomas & Co. The railway trucks loaded with wood from the country are shunted on to a track behind seven saw benches so close that the wood is handled direct from the car to the saw, and when cut is elevated to bins from which the delivery carts load by simply backing under a shoot and pulling a lever.

BUSY SCENE

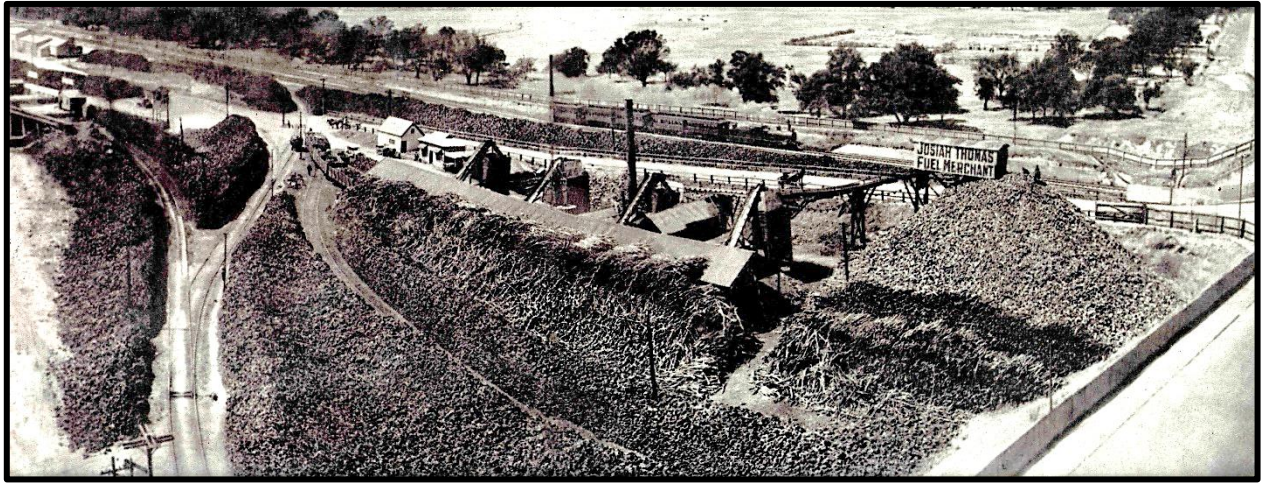
The main road from the city to Hilton crosses the railway yard on a bank about 20 ft high. There are four separate openings in the bank, bridged over to allow trains working through.

Through the opening under the Hilton road a busy scene unfolds. Conveyances of many descriptions hurry to and from the large freight sheds or adjacent tracks where cars are being loaded or discharged.

The Mail, 29 September 1928, p21

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Josiah Thomas Woodyard, Mile End, circa 1927

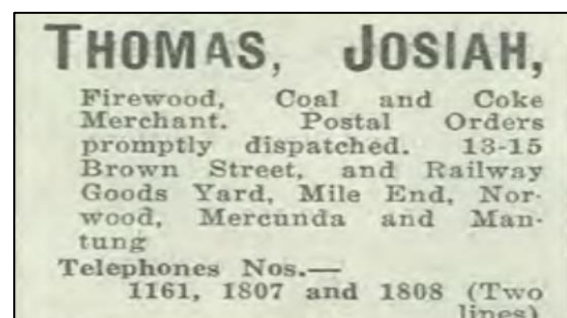
950 TONS FIREWOOD BURNT.

In most of the railway yards along the Mallee (River Murray) railways there are huge stocks of firewood, long and stumps, brought in by farmers and held against the day when they shall be converted into cash. Every farm, likewise, has its huge stacks of stumps gathered in the process of clearing the land. Recently, within the past fortnight, a fire broke out in a 600-tons stack of long wood in the Tuscan railway yard, and nothing could be done to save the heap. The fire, it is believed, originated in a saw-dust heap, one side of the line being nothing but sawdust, refuse of a saw-mill. The fire burnt for over two days. Just as it was thought that everything was safe, a whirlwind descended upon the ashes, and throwing these broadcast was the means of starting another fire, when nearly 400 tons of stumps went into ashes. Railway men and surrounding farmers had to stand by in the intense heat watching that the fire did not reach a crop about 20 yards away. This did catch alight once, but was put out before the flames could spread. Railway fences suffered, but the buildings escaped. The total quantity of wood destroyed was about 950 tons.

Bunyip 2 Dec, 1932, p4

An indicator of the size of the Thomas family's Mile End operation: in November 1932 the business had around 1,010 tons of wood stockpiled at the Tuscan rail yard in the Riverland awaiting transport to Adelaide. (Tuscan was a township about 32 kilometres south-west of Loxton; which no longer exists).

A fire swept through the wood, taking two days to completely burn out. The heat from the fire was so intense that no-one could go within 150 yards of the blaze.

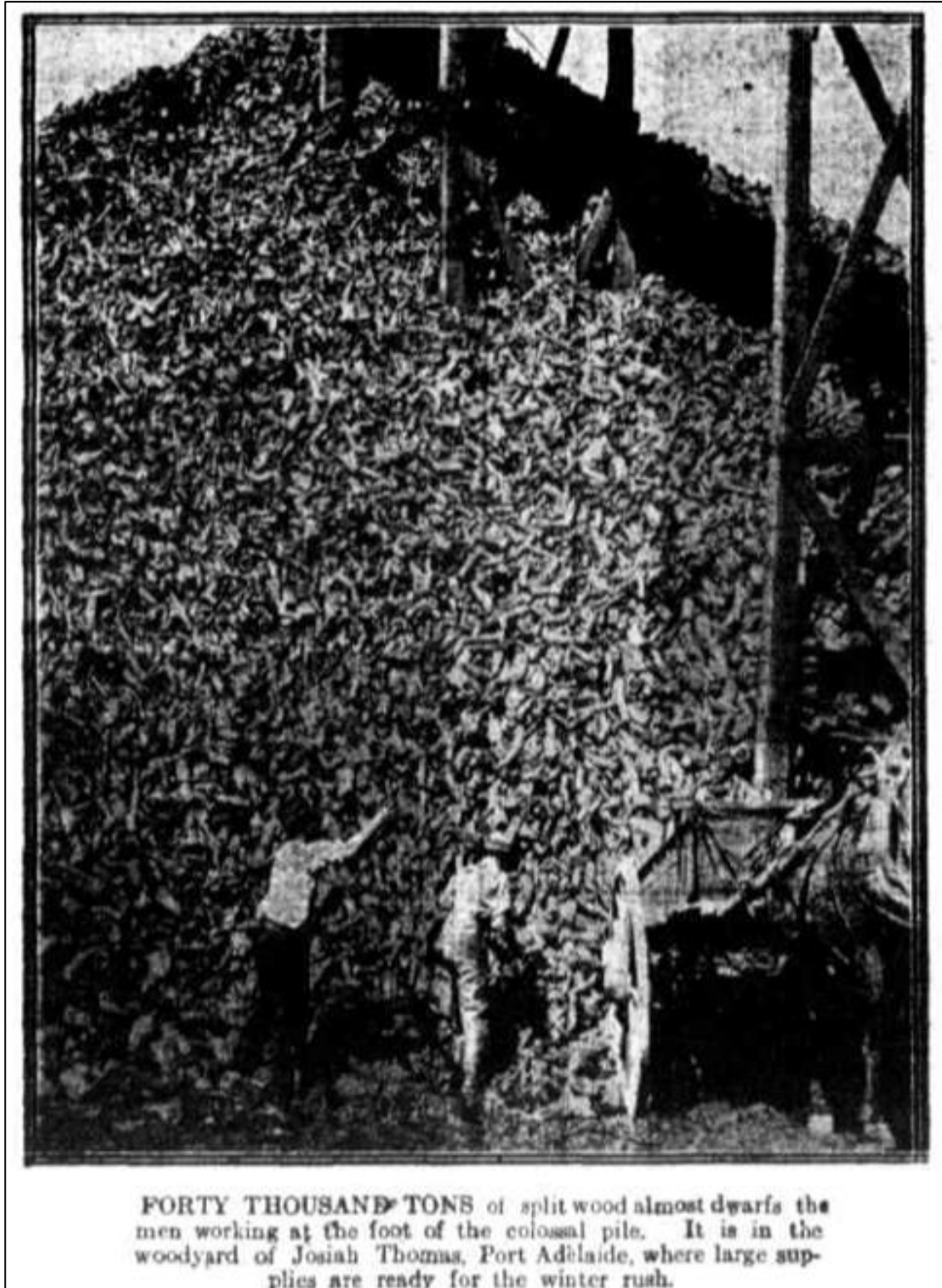


Sands & McDougall directory, 1930, p2021

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A photograph in the Observer newspaper, 3 April 1930, page 47, shows 40,000 tons of Thomas firewood at Port Adelaide awaiting distribution.



An unsuccessful attempt was made by thieves to blow open the company safe at Mile End in March 1931 (perhaps showing how well the business was doing).

<h3>THIEVES CAUSE FIRE</h3> <hr/> <h3>ATTEMPTS TO OPEN SAFES</h3> <hr/> <h3>Locks Jammed by Explosion</h3> <p>Early this morning thieves attempted to blow open two safes at the premises of South Australian Brush Company Limited, Flinders street, Adelaide.</p> <p>In doing so they set fire to a quantity of cotton which had been packed round the safes to deaden the sound of the explosions.</p> <p>The fire spread quickly, but automatic sprinklers controlled it until the arrival of the fire brigade.</p>	<p>Little damage was done by the fire, but water soaked through the floor to a basement, where a large quantity of cotton is stored.</p> <p>The safes, which contained only books, were not opened by the thieves as the explosions jammed the locks. Gelignite was placed in the keyholes and tamped in.</p> <p>Entry to the premises was gained by climbing on to the roof of an unoccupied building next door and forcing away wire protecting a skylight.</p> <p>An attempt was also made last night to open the safe at the premises of Josiah Thomas fuel merchant, Mile-End. A side window was forced and gelignite inserted in the keyhole of the safe. The explosion jammed the lock and the door could not be opened.</p> <p>In this case, too, the safe contained only books. The police found small quantities of fuse and gelignite on the premises. Bags were used to deaden the sound of the explosion.</p>
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News, 13 March, 1931, p1

From the 1920s the transport of wood to Adelaide was made easier by the proliferation of motor trucks and better roads. Transport by rail to Adelaide was gradually phased out.

By 1940 the Thomas family had set up new branches of their business at Norwood in suburban Adelaide and at Mantung, about 48 kilometres south-west of Loxton.

The Thomas family sold their Brown Street, Adelaide premises in April 1951 for £25,000. At that time the Mile End depot was still in operation and one of Adelaide's largest woodyards.

By the 1950s the wood and fuel business was beginning to decline because of the availability of electricity, coal and gas supplies.

[West Torrens Historical Society research]

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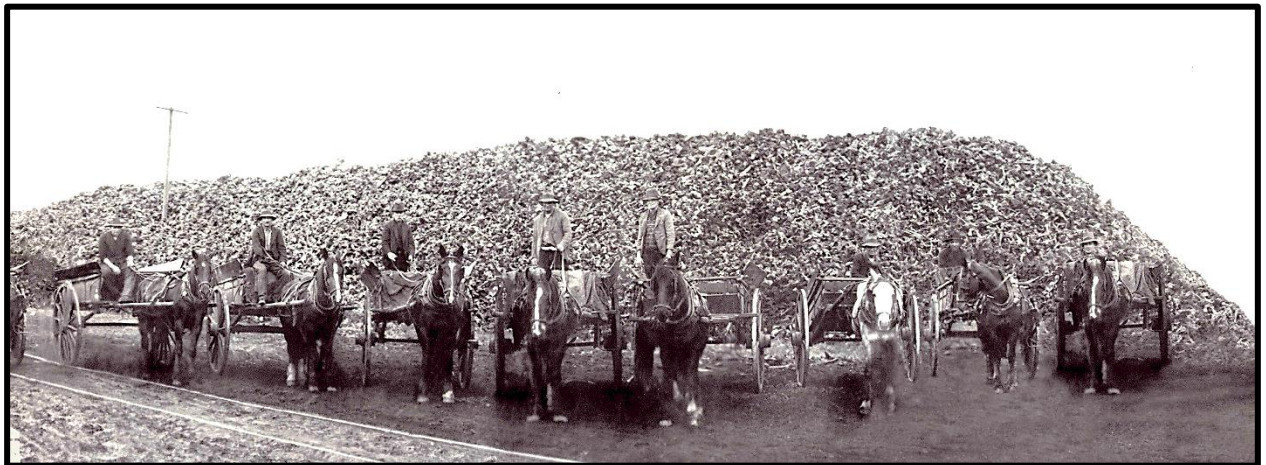
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Wood supply from the Murray Mallee

Farmers out in the Murray Mallee chopped it down and sent it by rail to Mile End. Back then it would have been all done with an axe, those poor old fellas.

Morgan and Loveday were significant railheads. The Loveday camp was where the Government kept all the prisoners of war. I don't know for sure, but I guess they were they used as wood cutters or to load the trains. They would have been made to chop all the timber down to help clear the land around Loveday. This would be in the days before chainsaws, which came out in the late fifties, and well, they were cumbersome looking things.

In those early days of Josiah's Woodyard, the wood was carted by horses and drays, but we didn't have horses, we had motorised vehicles.



Josiah Thomas Woodyard, Mile End, circa 1927

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Mile End Fuel Supplies

Dad bought the business and registered it in 1961 as the Mile End Fuel Supply Company Pty Ltd. It was the largest woodyard at that time. In its heyday, due to era and the demand, Mile End Fuel Supplies were the largest and most successful fuel supply business in South Australia, Josiah Thomas was then selling millions of tonnes.

When Dad first started, he supplied a lot of bakeries with wood for their ovens. We used to regularly supply Government House. They took coke and firewood. We sold it to anyone who needed it, to businesses or homes.

People came and collected the wood in their cars with trailers, or Utes, or trucks.



Kevin Ward, 1984, [WTHS LH0791-79]

The Mile End area had a wood delivery man, Kevin Ward, who collected by horse and cart. He did this from the 1930s until the mid-1980s. He also delivered kerosene, and in the summer, he would deliver ice.

February 11, 1975

Bob Veitch : General Manager - Mile End Fuel Supply

"Ores, Minerals, Stone, Sands, Ta Foundry Coke, Briquettes, Firewood, Grain -

If you can move it in bulk it's good sense to use rail."

It's a door to door service.

"The service offered by rail is one of the main things as far as we're concerned. To start with, rail trucks are pretty well available at all times and it's just a matter of ordering. Say we want 100 tonnes of foundry coke from Wollongong; we place the order and know that in three days the Railways will have it there in the yard - no problems. We have no delays over breakdowns, we simply order the number of trucks we want and it's as good as finished. I mean, for reliability, to shift bulk materials over any distance, I guess it's just good sense to use rail. There's no better way to do it. And it's run regular like clockwork."

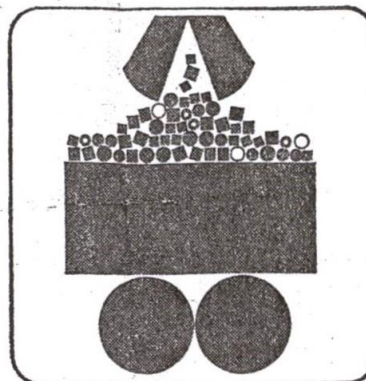
It doesn't cost the earth.

"With rail there's no hold-up waiting for one particular consignment to be delivered. Whether it's 50 tonne or 200 or 300 tonne, it all arrives on the same day at the same time, so naturally that makes our handling cheaper. All in all, the economy of handling bulk materials by rail make it the obvious choice, without even considering the other advantages."



There's no double handling problems.

"A lot of material would be very awkward to carry satisfactorily by any other form of transport over long distances, whereas with rail we're not restricted at all. Our orders vary from copper concentrates, nickel ore, all types of solid fuel, sand and metal, to talc and grain."



"It's brought here to Mile End in the same rail trucks as it originally loaded into. Even if there's a change of rail gauge involved in the interstate transfer, there's no need for double handling."

The modern rail trucks have interchangeable bogies, and all very smartly organised. They can be jacked up and changed from one gauge to another in a matter of a very few minutes."

Rail helps keep our customers happy.

"We've been using rail since 1911 and always found it reliable, efficient, speedy and economical. We can get a consignment here, transfer it by grab to our own tip trucks and have it delivered to our customers' premises all in the same day. Rail gives us a door-to-door service and we give our customers the same. It's good value."

You can't beat it
For details of how the Railways can help you, contact your local Station Master or the Commercial Manager, Adelaide Railway Station.

This is No. 3 in a series of advertisements compiled from "personal experience" interviews. Each in the series demonstrated the capability of rail in different specialised areas.

PHONE: 51 9617
212 2954
A/H: 276 5830
272 4649

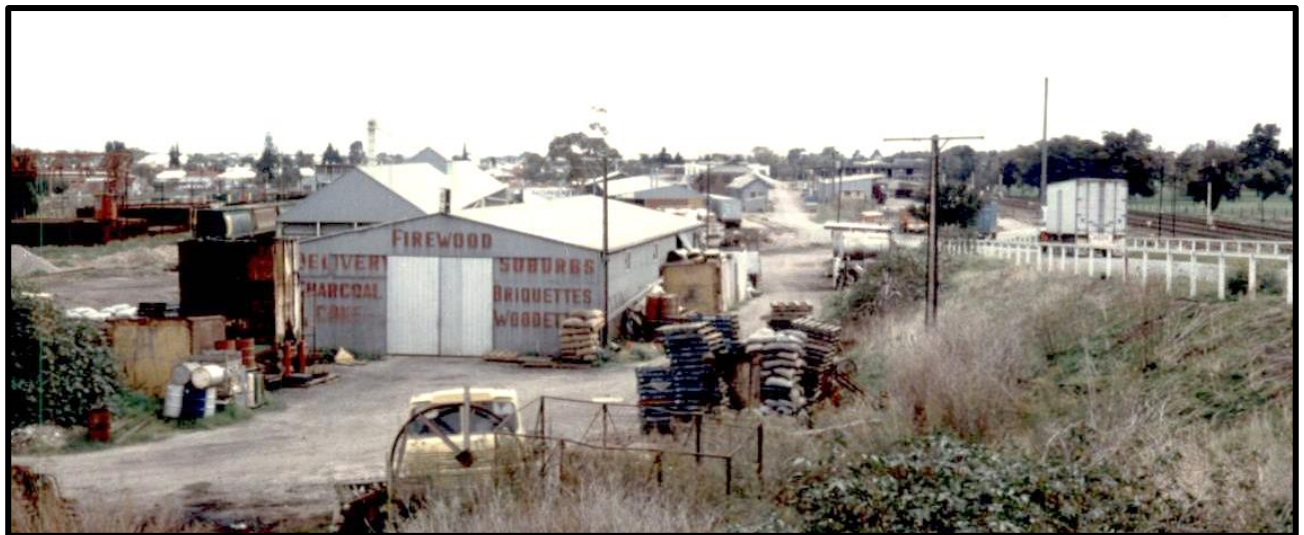
MILE END FUEL SUPPLY Co. Pty. Ltd.
Fuel Merchants & Cartage Contractors

Railway Goods Yard,
MILE END,
ADELAIDE, S.A. 5031.

Preserving Memories

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Back when we took over the woodyard, it was purely a woodyard. We changed with the times. We changed and we expanded. We sold coal, coke, briquettes, woodettes, and charcoal.



We used to work bloody hard. Dad used to do all the foundry coke from Wollongong and Illawarra when it arrived by rail, and he'd unload it into tippers, and we'd deliver it to all the foundries in Adelaide.

Preserving Memories

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It was a good job but when environmental concerns were raised the foundries were forced to close and the businesses went broke.

Dad had briquettes brought in from Victoria. In the first year, he filled a big shed, a 100 by 40 feet shed, full of briquettes. We sold eleven and a half thousand tonnes in that first year.

Briquettes are made of brown coal. They were not much bigger than a brick with a rounded end. They came from Yallourn from the coal mine. We were the main distributors, and we had them every year from then on. Then we had coal from R.W. Millers. The coke came from the South Australian Gas Company at Bowden.

The woodettes were made by Prestwoods at Port Adelaide. We cleared a site and had a huge shed built at Mile End. It was chock-a-block full of briquettes and woodettes.



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We still had wood, but we also had all the other commodities as well, like charcoal. We supplied charcoal to the Glenelg Barbecue Inn for years.

We always went there for Christmas dinner; it was the best place in Adelaide. His son-in-law Chick Marchioro took over. After Bojo died one of the boys took over, and is running it now. It's a bloody beautiful restaurant. You can't get a better restaurant in Adelaide. I've been going there since I was a kid.

Bozidar Stojanovic, started the Hindley Street Inn in 1958, selling it in 1973. He opened the Glenelg Barbecue Inn in 1975. It is now owned and operated by grandson Martin Marchioro and his family who continue his traditions into a fourth generation.



[glenelgbbqinn.com.au]



Preserving Memories

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

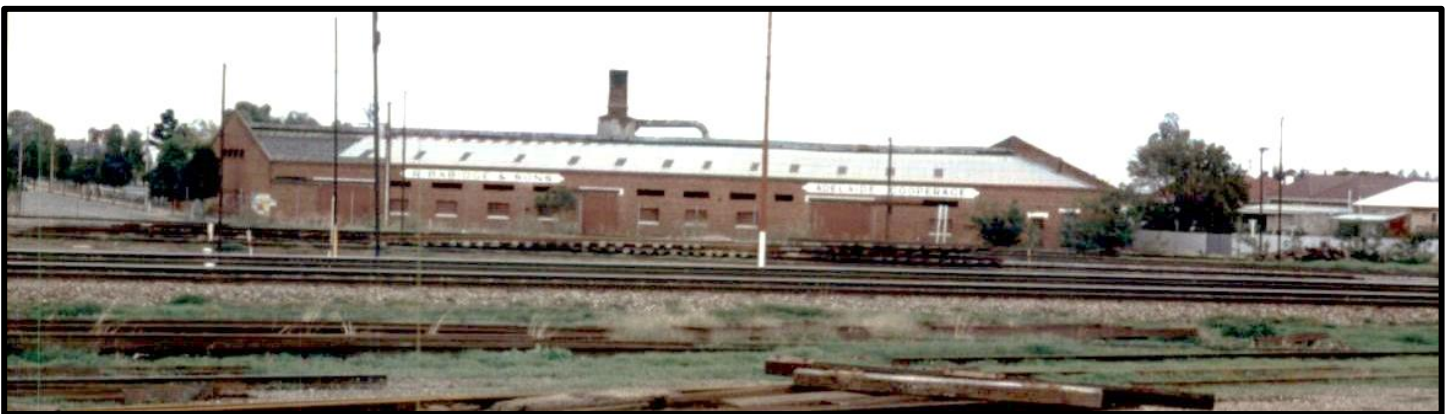
Dad brought in three rotor booms from America. There's only six in Australia, and we had three of them. They used to sit up the top and pick all the wood, coke, pine bark, Mount Gambier stone, or whatever we had to unload out of our trucks. They were a real asset.



Mile End Fuel Supplies, 1976

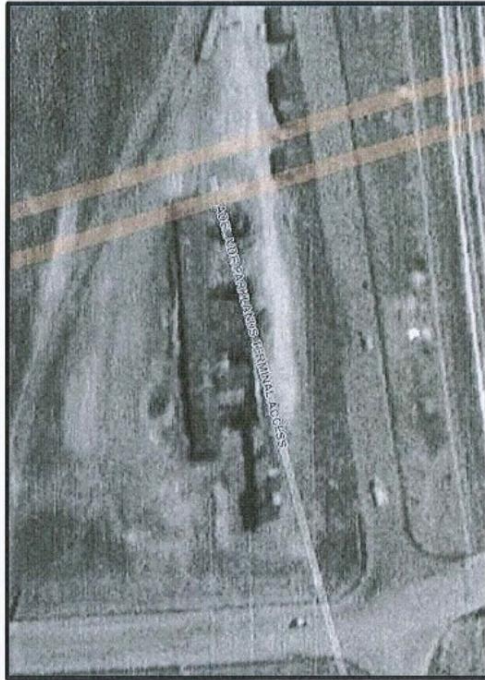
I liked working at Mile End because every day was different. Some days I'd work all day there and then shoot up to Mount Mary at night and pick up a load of wood and get back at 2am.

The Babidge Cooperage was also near the Mile End railyards. When it closed Dad bought it, we all helped clean it up and then he sold it.



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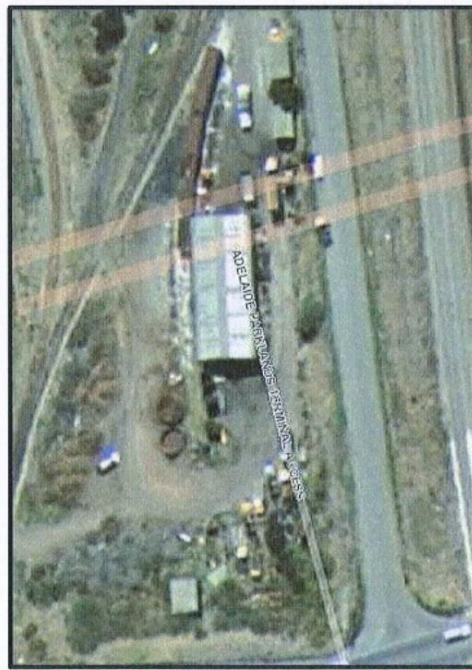
1949



1959



1969



1979

MILE END FUEL SUPPLIES

(the orange lines shows the location of the current Sir Donald Bradman Road and Bridge)

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Salisbury

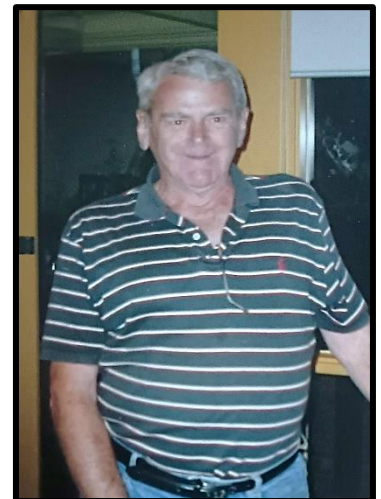
In the early 1970s Dad bought Salisbury Woodyard as well, which was at 15 Cross Keys Road. Mum and Dad would work like Trojans, even on weekends. Seven days a week. It was hectic.

The Salisbury Woodyard was a huge property, so we covered all bases and sold more than wood. We had landscape supplies, fuel supplies and a fodder store. It did very well, it was very successful.

There was a demand for landscaping materials because housing and commercial development in Salisbury was increasing. We were in the right place at the right time.

We put in a weighbridge. To get it, the mechanic and I went over to Edithburgh's Salt Works, and we pulled the weighbridge out of there, dismantled it, and brought it back to Salisbury.

Dick Harris, who just passed away this year, was Dad's right-hand man and he ran the Salisbury business. On Saturday mornings they'd have the police out there directing traffic off Park Terrace and Cross Keys Road, just trying to keep it flowing. People would come from everywhere, in all sorts of vehicles, all shapes and sizes... for landscape supplies, fodder, and wood. The lot. It was incredible.



Richard (Dick) Harris, 2001

This was a residential area, but obviously there were some small farms out there, as well as a lot of factories and commercial and industrial expansion.

People still had to buy pellets for their chooks, pigeons and other birds. We had everything. Dick supplied lots of fodder to Parafield Poultry Farm. It was a booming business.

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Transport Company

Around 1971 we saw other opportunities and the business changed direction from being a woodyard and fuel supplier to a transport company. We still kept the name as Mile End Fuel Supplies, but used MEFS as the branding.



In 1972 we were carriers for RACE, Railways Australia Container Express, and would collect the containers from the ships at Outer Harbour or from the rail terminals and deliver them to businesses all around Adelaide. These were 20- and 40-foot containers with anything from potato chips to cars. Most were from overseas.

In 1987 we were the first private transport company to have a side lifter to lift containers off the ground, or if on the ground onto their backs. It was a big advantage as containers started to become popular as a way of transporting goods.



We also established an import/export agency where we looked after import/ export containers, did container repairs, washed and cleaned them, and stored containers in the yard. We became an overseas customs clearance depot and a transport business.

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Delivery contains reliability

THERE'S nothing quite like delivery to your door, especially when safety and convenience are concerned.

And when it comes to the pick-up and delivery of containers, people want reliability.

Mile End Fuel Supply Co Pty Ltd has been serving SA in the wood industry since 1913.

The company branched out with container handling and delivery, and picks up and delivers containers to and from railyards and sea terminals.

The family business has a staff of 15 and in the owner's eyes has "changed with the times".

"We always try to be one step ahead of our competitors and felt containers were the way to go," Mr Bob Veitch said. "We have 30 years' experience in the area of transporting and aim to specialise in the pick-up and delivery of containers with a convenient door-to-door service."

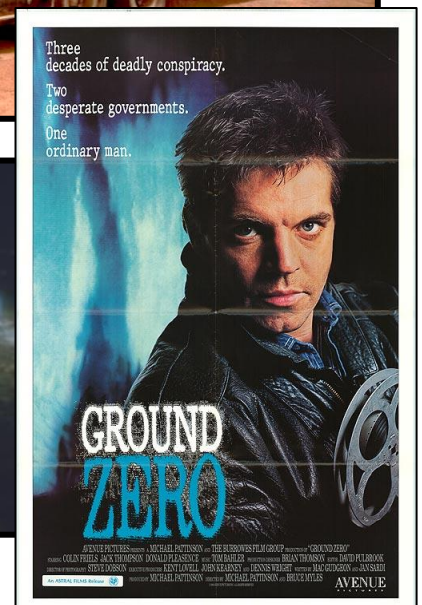
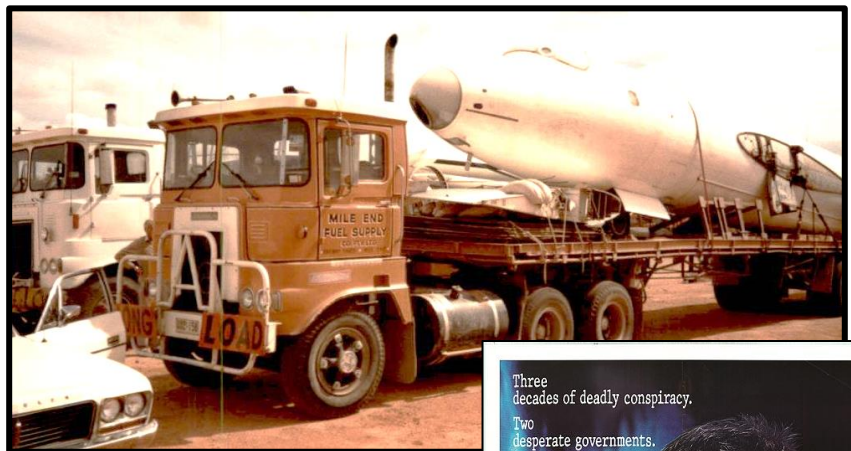
"For companies despatching or receiving goods consigned in containers, the on-the-ground container is an internationally proven advantage."

"Working containers on the ground results in fewer accidents and less damage to goods."

Mr Veitch said unpacking and packing resulted in up to 60 per cent time-saving. The service eliminated the double-handling aspect and risk of damage. You can contact his firm on 231 9617.

We transported the plane used in the 1987 film Ground Zero about British nuclear tests at Maralinga. (Starring Colin Friels, Jack Thompson and Burnum Burnum.)

The wings went up on another truck.



Preserving Memories

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Goolwa Transport

Transport firms merge

Two long standing, experienced transport firms — Mile End Fuel Supply (MEFS) and Goolwa Transport — have merged to offer a reliable, competitively priced delivery service to the South Coast.

The business, which will continue to be known as Goolwa Transport, operates from Broderick Terrace, Victor Harbor and Dowdodd Crescent, Goolwa as well as a receiving depot at 70 Rosewater Terrace, Ottoway.

Local identity Bob Veitch is a director of MEFS and Bill Holland of Goolwa Transport, will continue as manager of the South Coast enterprise.

And the same well known team of operators, Kym Seaman, Guy Jessen, David Bowd and Kym Luscombe deliver daily to Victor Harbor, Port Elliot, Middleton, Goolwa and surrounding districts.

The two firms have had over 65 years of experience between them.

Goolwa Transport and its predecessor, South Coast Transport have been in business on the South Coast for 26 years while MEFS Transport has had 40 years experience.

South Coast manager, Bill Holland said the firm was the supplier of bricks and pavers and all other building material from PGH, Hallett, Boral, Littlehampton, Inglewood and Salisbury brick companies.

"Whether clay or concrete products, we can supply the lot and you can also order direct from us," Bill said.

"We will also pickup and deliver sheds, carports, sleepers, machinery and any business supplies — of course we also cater for the general public."

"We are very competitively priced with charges which compare more than favorably with Adelaide carriers."

So for a prompt, efficient carrier service contact Goolwa Transport on 552187 and given them the opportunity to quote — often their price is cheaper.

GOOLWA TRANSPORT

GENERAL CARRIERS
Servicing Adelaide daily

DOWDODD CRESCENT - GOOLWA
PHONE 55 2187
VICTOR HARBOR DEPOT.
22 Broderick Terrace, Shed 7
ADELAIDE DEPOT:
70 Rosewater Terrace, Ottoway

Times, Victor Harbor, 8 September 1992, p5



In 1992 Dad bought Goolwa Transport and ran that. When Dad passed away, some bloke wanted a big warehouse, so I had a warehouse built there for him. We just sold this business last year.

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Closing the businesses

We had closed Mitcham Fuel Supply in 1969.

I transferred MEFS Transport to a yard in Ottoway in 1986. At that time we had six side loaders and an assortment of trucks. There was a workshop for trucks, a warehouse, and a container washing facility.

In 1990, when I closed the Mile End woodyard down, wood was selling for \$100 a ton, but back in 1959, it would have been around \$30 a ton.



There is still a demand for wood. Hollards out at Mitcham, and Rowland Smart at Stirling, still sell wood and there's also a woodyard out at Parafield. A few other people have taken it on, but they sell it for \$500 a ton now and it's all red gum from New South Wales and Victoria, and where the swamp countries are.

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Sale of MEFS

Around 1994 we sold the company to Austainers, Pete and Robert Kuok from Hong Kong. They amalgamated that with Salix. The Kuok group of companies owned a lot of places in Sydney, like Paddy's Market. They also bought the Coca-Cola factories in Asia and some Mediterranean shipping.



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New directions

When we sold the Transport business, Alan Scott rang me up from Mount Gambier, and asked me if I would manage his transport yard down at Gilman.

I had all the interstate trucks coming in, between 70 and 200 trucks a day. I enjoyed it and stayed there for six years.



Scott's Transport Industries, Kapara Road Gillman, 2008 [Streetview]

After that I went out to Greenfields, and I worked three days a week for Kagan Brothers, beautiful people, and absolutely brilliant people to work with.

I was running the warehouse and growing the business.

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Family

I met my wife Sue in June 1971. Coincidentally, the same people that introduced my mum and dad to each other, introduced me to my wife.

I was at a hotel one day in Macclesfield with Mum and Dad when their friends Mr. and Mrs. Melville walked in with their daughter Helen and another lass. I just looked at this other lass, then turned to my mum and said, "That's the one I'm going to marry." And I did.

She came outside with me to see the speedboat we'd just bought earlier that day and we chatted, back in the pub we danced and chatted more.

The next day, the Melville's came down to Goolwa and Sue came too. I did my best to impress her! I saw her again on the Wednesday night and met her mum and dad. They were a really beautiful family, and she was their only daughter.

We went to the movies to see Ryan's Daughter. We just clicked, got married and we've never been apart since.

She worked at AMP insurance company in the mail room. At the time she was earning more money than I was, because I worked for my old man and got nothing!

She worked full time for three years before we got married. She later worked part time as a driver, picking up school kids, taking them to a childcare centre. She drove a V8 Commodore with twin exhausts and the kids loved it.



Bob and Sue, 1990s

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Children and grandchildren

We have two daughters, Sally and Kylie.

Sally's married with three children. She's a hairdresser, and they're quite busy. Her husband's a plumber. Hartman Plumbing is based at Lonsdale with 14 or 15 plumbers working for them. My wife Sue helps them in the office two days a week in the office.

My younger daughter, Kylie, was in transport... obviously taking after my father and myself. She worked for Ian Cootes and was the only woman. She was the Transport Supervisor in charge of 40 blokes. Cootes Transport was a very, very good company.

Kylie ran a semi-trailer company out at Cavan running B-double refrigerated transport to Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Perth. She has 100 acres up at Oakbank, a horse farm, with an equestrian set-up. On Thursdays, Sue and I go and work up there, cutting lawns, and cleaning up after horses, just labouring!

I've got five grandchildren, two boys and then three girls. Jake Robert is 18, then the rest follow, Leigh Veitch 17, Jessie Ann 16, Jazz May 14, and Maiya Ann 13.

Health issues

As a non-drinker, non-smoker, who kept fit all the time, bugger me, I got some kidney disease... nephritis. My doctor, Tony Clarkson, reckoned it came from my tonsils. I had my tonsils out when I was about five years old, and he said my antibodies probably didn't shut off and the antibodies just kept coming through and eventually damaged both kidneys.

They did the tests and Tony said "You've got about five months before you go on dialysis." I said, "What the hell's dialysis?" He said, "Go next door and have a look." Well, I walked in, I thought '[Expletives deleted!]...stick this up the jumper!'

I lasted five years without dialysis. I bought a book on alternate medicines, I had to cook everything and couldn't have any protein or potatoes, tomatoes or bananas.

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Sue and I worked hard at it and for five years we lasted without going on dialysis, we did really well.

In 1989 I had a kidney transplant and it lasted 17 and a half years. It came from a Newcastle miner's wife named Jenny. We weren't supposed to know who it came from, but I found her husband. I got in touch with him and we didn't get off the phone for two and a half hours. He came across to Adelaide for the weddings of both my girls and stayed with us. Bloody great bloke. We were even on the 7:30 Report on Channel 2.

My daughter Kylie gave me the second kidney about 14 years ago and it lasted about six and a half years. Unfortunately, since they have both failed, I've been on dialysis now for about the last seven years, three days a week at a dialysis centre in Hove.

Transplant Games

I represented Australia twice, in 1995 and again in 1997, at the Transplant Games in 200, 400 metres, long jump, shot putt and volleyball.

I've been to the World Games in Sydney and the World Games in Manchester.



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My doctor Tony was a lovely guy. He was a fun-loving guy, a top bloke. I went down to Unley where we got our blood tests done and Clarkson's sitting there in the same waiting room. He had leukaemia and he died not long after that. I went to his funeral, dressed in my Australian blazer from the Transplant Games.

I become involved in the Transplant Games when they were held in Adelaide. I ran all the transport, and the organizers were really rapt because no one got left behind, no one got lost, and no one had a problem with transport. The husband of my first transplant donor came over from Newcastle and helped out too.



Around 2004 I had a bleed on the brain and I had my skull opened to relieve the pressure on my brain.

I've had a fair bit of injury, a brain haemorrhage, kidney problems and transplants, and three knee operations, bones broken and my jaw wired up!

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Variety Club Bash

I went in the Variety Club Bash in 1988, just before I got crook. I went in a 1954 Vanguard, which I bought for 300 bucks.



There was a group of South Australians that were involved. We first went from Adelaide to Port Wakefield. In Port Wakefield, we unveiled a plaque in memory of Possum Kipling, (Redex Trail driver in the 1950s, and WW2 RAAF serviceman), then on to the Barossa Valley on the first night. Then Berri to the border into Oak Vale and back to Broken Hill. On the night in Broken Hill, Peter Brown, an artist, painted a picture on my car. From there we went to Bourke and met everyone else. There were 208 cars, it was bloody rowdy up there.

When I got back to Adelaide after the bash Peter Cochrane saw me and he said, "Bob, what did you think of the bash?" I said, "Absolutely bloody beautiful, Peter. I really loved it. We'd go again." I told him I wanted to go again the next year, in 1989, but that's when I received my transplant.

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Goolwa Camping and Tourist Park

In 1974 Dad bought 20 acres out of Goolwa. Goolwa originally had a caravan park on the river, and when it closed Dad decided he would build a new one. In the 1980s he developed the land to make a Caravan Park. Dad would just get on and do things. You couldn't say something couldn't be done because he'd just do it to prove he could. He built to the plans he was given by the South Australian Government. It was very popular for tourists and holiday makers.

We had a good manager and assistant manager there, but I'd go there on Thursdays to make sure everything was all right. Because I had worked for Golden North I insisted they sell Golden North ice creams. They couldn't keep up with the demand. We also sold beer and wine.



Goolwa Camping and Tourist Park, 2006

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Mum wanted to sell it when Dad passed away in 2000. I liked having the caravan park and wanted to keep it. I took it over for the last 18 years and we put in cabins and two swimming pools, a jumping pillow, camp kitchen, and we modernised it.



Goolwa Camping and Tourist Park, 2020

We sold it in 2020, three years ago, after it being in the family for 30 years, to a bloke from Brisbane. He had it for 12 months, and then Discovery Parks bought it. They just spent another \$24 million on it.

Last thoughts

In 2000 when dad died, that really rocked me. He was only 70.

Despite my health problems I've had a good life. I worked hard and I played football for many years and I have a bloody beautiful family.

Veitch - Scottish Ancestry

Paternal Great Great Grandparents

Robert Andrew Veitch (1807-1870)

married Margaret Steel Brown

(10 March 1811, Scotland - 27 Sept 1868)

1 Peter (1835),

2 Mary (1836-1921),

3 Stephen (1838-1906)

4 James Andrew (1840-1918),

5 Catherine Johnson (1843-1916)

6 Robert Andrew (1845-1928),

7 Agnes Denham (1846-1879),

8 Thomas Brown (1852-1913)



Robert, Margaret and the children, except for Peter, arrived at Port Adelaide on the *North* on 28 January 1859.

Paternal Great Grandparents

Thomas Brown Veitch (c1852, Glasgow - 1 Nov 1913, Kent Town)

married 22 November 1877, Adelaide

Margaret Andrina Bain Andrews

(9 August 1852, Olnafirth, Scotland -

12 December 1934)

1 Andrina Barbara (25 Nov 1878 - 11 Jun 1900)

2 Effie Margaret (2 Sep 1880 - 22 Dec 1963)

3 Thomas Andrew (8 Dec 1881 - 6 Apr 1903)

4 Frank Athol (25 May 1883 - 11 Oct 1947)

5 Mark (1885 - 1885)

6 William Robert (4 June 1886 - Somme France WW1, 26 May 1918)

7 Alexander Stewart (23 Nov 1890 - 25 Jul 1971)

8 Kate Agnes (6 Dec 1893 - 22 Jul 1913)

9 Robert Hedley Hamilton (20 Jan 1897 - 26 Feb 1994)

VEITCH.—On the 12th December, at 4 Janet street, Evandale, St. Peters, Margaret Bain, widow of Thomas B. Veitch, dearly loved mother of Effie, Frank, Alex, and Bob, aged 82 years. Peacefully sleeping. (Result of accident).

Advertiser, 13 Dec 1934, p14

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Paternal Grandparents

Robert Hedley Hamilton (20 Jan 1897, Kent Town - 26 Feb 1994)

enlisted Keswick, served WW1

married 27 Jan 1919, Methodist Manse Kent Town

Alma Mary Blott (13 Sep 1900, Broken Hill - 19 Nov 1977)

1 Jean (15 Apr 1920 - 15 May 1955)

married 31 Dec 1940, Allan Vincent Lamshed (1921 - 2008)

2 Ruth (27 Sep 1921 - 6 Jul 1997)

married 28 June 1941, Allen Ross Burnell (1918 - 1992)

3 **Robert John Veitch (26 May 1930 - 12 Oct 2000) born Unley Park**

married Helen Lemmey (26 July 1932 - 2 April 2015)



Robert and Helen, circa 1953

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Holt / Lemmey – English Ancestry

Maternal Great Grandparents - Holt

George Herbert Holt (19 June 1859 - 9 April 1925)

born Bradford, Yorkshire, England

married 6 December 1884, Mitcham

Caroline (Carrie) Eliza Simpson (15 February 1862 - 27 February 1908)

- 1 William Benjamin (25 Oct 1885 - 1 Sep 1967)
butcher (Unley) married 29 Apr 1911, May Trevorrow
- 2 Gertrude (Gertie) Emma (12 Apr 1887 - 28 Sep 1964)
married, Richmond, Arthur Thomas Shaw
- 3 **Doris Abia (2 Jan 1893, Ellenville - 23 Feb 1991, Mitcham)**
- 4 Frank Warburton (11 May 1895 - 15 Jun 1968)
married 1914, Myrtle Jury (1894 - 1963)

MARRIAGES.
HOLT—SIMPSON.—On the 6th December, at the residence of the bride's mother, by the Rev W. Collier, George Herbert eldest son of W. G. Holt, Adelaide, to Caroline Eliza, eldest daughter of the late William Simpson, of Mitcham

Express and Telegraph, 24 Dec 1884, p4



George Herbert Holt (centre)

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Maternal Grandparents - Lemmey

Doris Abia Holt (2 Jan 1893 - 25 Feb 1991)

**married 1912, Alfred Richard (Dick) Dawson
Lemmey (7 Dec 1881 - 29 Jul 1949)**

LEMMY.—On July 29, at his residence, Upper Sturt, A. R. D. (Dick) Lemmey, the dearly beloved husband of Doris Lemmey and loving father of Frank, Betty, Doris, George, Joan, Nancy, Helen, Dawson and the late Fred. Aged 66 years.

Chronicle, 4 Aug 1949, p35

- 1 Frederick (24 Sep 1913 - 6 Dec 1928)
- 2 Frank (Bully) (23 Feb 1918 - 19 Nov 1979)
m 28 Mar 1942 Eunice Daphne Morgan
(c1917-12 Apr 2006)
Stanley Frank (1943), Richard Hal (1949)

MORGAN—LEMMY.—The marriage of Eunice D., daughter of Mrs. and the late Mr. S. Morgan, of Ramage st., Unley, to Frank, son of Mr. and Mrs. A. R. Lemmey, of Belair, will be solemnised at Unitarian Church, Wakefield st., on Saturday, March 28, at 6.30 p.m.

Advertiser, 24 Mar 1942, p8

- 3 Betty
(10 June 1920 - 25 Mar 2004)
m Dean Russel Eades
(8 Dec 1925 - 4 Aug 1989)
Max, George, Janette, Desmond
- 4 Doris c1922-
m
Brian, David, 2 girls
- 5 George (16 Oct 1925 - 2 Mar 2005)
m 1948 Rosslyn Leah Coats (1928 -1997)
*Janet Elizabeth (1951), Jennie (1956),
Ian Stewart Anderson (c1958)
Alan David (1960), George (c1960),
Margaret Rosslyn (c1962)*
- 6 Joan (23 Nov 1927 - 2010)
m Lindsay Morgan
5 children
- 7 Nancy (c1930 -)
married Colin Stacey
Beryl, Frank, Wendy, Bruce
- 8 Helen (26 Jul 1932 - 2 Apr 2015)
m Robert John Veitch (26 May 1930 - 12 Oct 2000)
Robert, Gloria, Peter
- 9 Dawson (Joe) (1936 - 16 Sep 2016)
married Yvonne Dawn Gamblin
(c1934 - 2006)
4 children



Back: Fred, Alfred, Doris Front: Betty, Frank, circa 1926



Joan, Helen, George, Betty, Dawson, Doris, Nancy

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Lemmey family

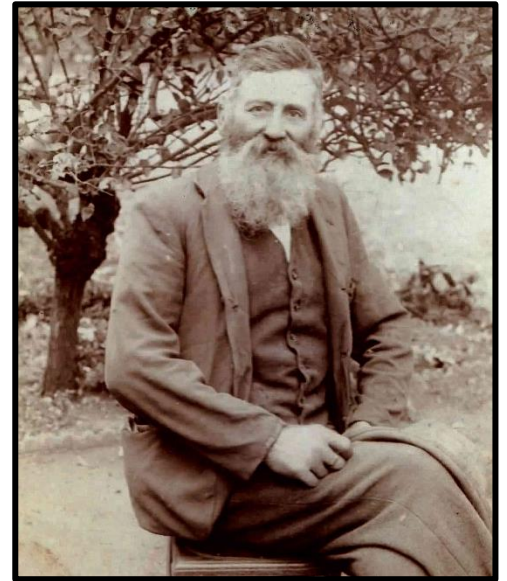
George Foord Dawson Lemmey

(14 Apr 1844 - 19 Feb 1911)

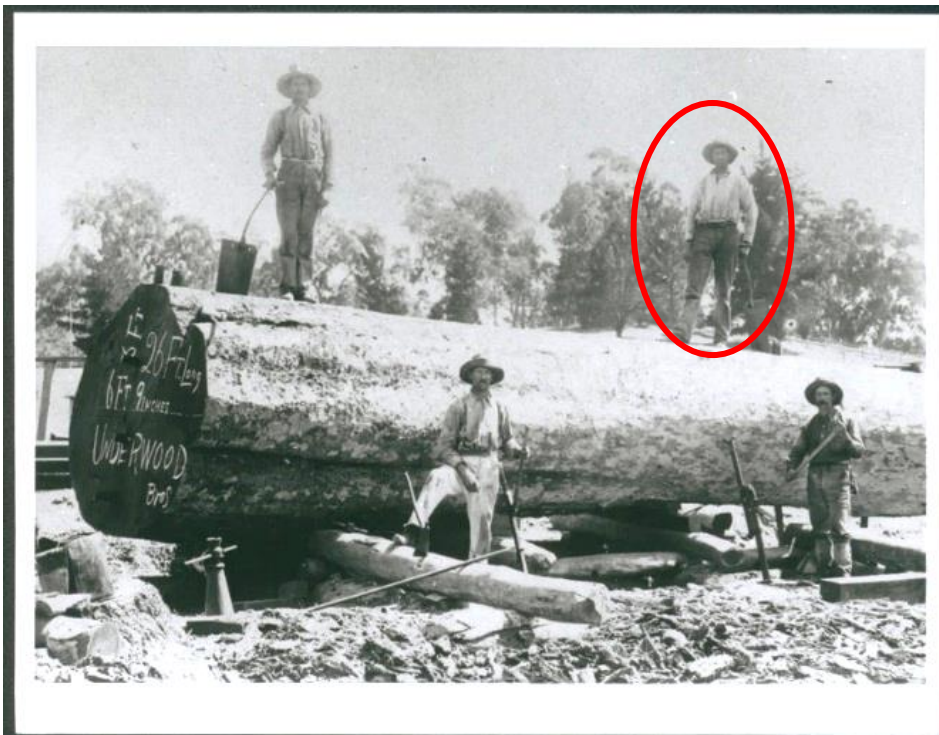
married 11 March 1878,

Sarah Ann Wilkinson Elliot (1838 - 3 Sep 1926)

- 1 Hannah Cordelia
(18 Dec 1878 - 30 Aug 1879) Modbury
- 2 Ellen Elizabeth (24 Nov 1879 - 1937)
married 23 Nov 1904,
John Charles Babidge (1880 - 1937)
- 3 **Alfred Richard (Dick) Dawson Lemmey**
(7 Dec 1881 – 29 Jul 1949)



George Lemmey



B 20547

Pit-Sawing,
Underwood Bros
[SLSA B20547]

Redgum felled on 23 January 1910 by the Underwood Brothers of Gumeracha. It grew adjacent to the main road at Gumeracha.

(L to R)

Andrew Beavis Underwood,
William Beavis Underwood,
George Lemmey,
Ben Carter

Preserving Memories

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

The *Preserving Memories* project aim is to interview people who have lived in or had extensive connections to the West Torrens area. The West Torrens Historical Society in conjunction with the City of West Torrens invite them to share their memories and talk about the events and experiences which helped to make up their life's history. It allows us all the chance to reflect on the past and to preserve those memories into the future.

This interview was conducted on 5th December 2022 by Graham Parry, member of the West Torrens Historical Society. We are committed to publishing biography works of quality and integrity. In this spirit, this document therefore reflects the experiences, views and opinions of the participant and are not necessarily the views and opinions of the interviewer, the West Torrens Historical Society, nor the City of West Torrens Council, and therefore neither the Society nor Council accepts responsibility for any comments or opinions expressed by the person being interviewed. (*Bob's words in italics*).

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Thankyou Bob for sharing your story and some insights into the background of the Mile End Woodyard and subsequent businesses.