

CONNECTING COBDEN

COMMUNITY



NEWSLETTER

Edition No. 15

March 13th, 2013

EDNA BLAKE

“TAKING EVERY DAY AS IT COMES”

Edna Blake (nee Holloway) was born more than 100 years ago at Wilkinson, a private nursing home in Camperdown on November 9th, 1912.

She lived eleven miles north of Camperdown, on the Milangil station, until she was nine years-old when her family shifted into town.

Edna was the third youngest of eight children – she had five sisters and two brothers. Her father managed Milangil which was owned by members of the Manifold family.

Because of the eleven mile distance to Camperdown, only her older brothers had the opportunity to go to school. “They took the horse and cart and had to open eighteen gates on the way. That was known as the shortcut,” she told us from her comfortable room at Heytesbury Lodge.

Edna said she had a pony called ‘Mousey’ which she wasn’t allowed to ride to school. She did admit to falling off a few times – as she described it, “I sat where her shadow was.”

“My mother home-schooled me and my sisters but my father decided it was too much work for her with all the other jobs around the house, so we moved to Camperdown in 1921.”

And so, at nine years of age, Edna went to Camperdown State School and then Camperdown Elementary. She completed school with her merit certificate at 15.

Following school, Edna was willing to work anywhere, “as long as it was honest.” She worked in domesticated jobs, cleaning houses and assisting in shops including the refreshment rooms at the railway station.

Edna met her husband-to-be Bill Blake at a dance at Camperdown Fire Station but she claimed it was not love at first sight. Her advice to young people is, “You have to know someone before you commit to them.”

In 1936, she married Bill and they leased a property from the Harrison family at Elingamite before buying a bush block nearby. “We started out with very little and did what we could.”

Her husband was the second oldest of the legendary Blake family who farmed at Devils Gully while also building roads around the district. “My husband continued to give the odd day to road-building but he stopped once our dairy farm got underway,” she said.

The six Blake boys were Joseph, Bill, Jack, Wilfred, Ray and the youngest Ron who eventually took over the road-building and contracting business while the others went farming. The three girls were Myrtle (Chisholm), Doris (Andrew) and Hazel (Smith/Billett).

Although they didn’t travel far, a favourite holiday spot for Bill and Edna was Lakes Entrance. “When we had the energy we didn’t have enough money and, when we had the money, we didn’t have the energy,” she laughs.

Bill enjoyed fishing but Edna never did, especially on the water. “I liked my feet on the ground, I don’t like anything that moves under my feet at all.”

After they sold the farm at Elingamite, the Blakes moved into a smart-looking new cream brick house in Bond Street, Cobden. Built by local identity Barry McGrath in the 1960s, Edna liked the design and the fact it was easy to keep clean – “and people said our Bond Street garden was lovely.”

Apart from gardening, Edna’s interests were dancing, knitting and crocheting. We have been told that she was an outstanding ballroom dancer - in fact she was a dancing judge at district balls - and her craftwork earned her a life governorship of Sunnyside House in Camperdown. Edna made knee-rugs for the elderly clients, and her other garments raised funds when sold in the opportunity shop. She was also particularly proud of a long-stitch tiger’s head which was eventually framed and presented to a Richmond supporter. “It took a long time to complete, and its eyes would follow you around the room,” she smiled.

Edna learned to cook by watching her mother. “There was also a cooking day every week at school. I used ordinary



Edna’s former Bond Street home



Cobden Technical School VCE students Tegan Rohan (left) and Melanie Nelson enjoyed interviewing Edna Blake at Heytesbury Lodge for this story.

cookbooks to bake biscuits and cakes which Bill would eat for breakfast, dinner and tea. He had a real sweet-tooth.”

The Blakes were married for nearly 68 years before Bill, four years older than Edna, died ten years ago.

Over her 100 years, Edna has enjoyed relatively good health with only bouts of mumps and influenza slowing her down for any length of time. “I hadn’t been to hospital for 35 years!”

Losing her sight to glaucoma nearly five years ago has been a blow but she says she is still able to “take every day as it comes.”

“It’s good accommodation here in Heytesbury Lodge. And good meals – too good, I’ve been putting on weight,” she laughs.

Edna has no secret ingredient for her longevity. “I don’t know, I can’t tell you why or how,” she said. Of the social vices, she was quick to say that smoking is a waste of money, “and I wasn’t interested in alcohol.”

Good genes do run in her family though. Despite her father passing away at the age of 65, when Edna was 15, her mother died at the age of 90, and her last-surviving sister died in Lyndoch four years ago, at the age of 97.

With one daughter, three grandchildren, six great grandchildren and one great, great grandchild, our centenarian is proud of her family, especially her daughter Robyn Lambert. “I only had one daughter, and I could not have wished for a better one,” she said.

When you consider that Edna’s life has seen Milangil homestead built, the first cars driven around Camperdown, and men (and women) from world wars farewelled, some not to return, she is well-qualified to advise the prime minister to “do more and talk less”.

And wise too: “Politics and religion are two things you don’t want to argue about.”

NO COUCH POTATO – HOME OR AWAY!

Hi, my name is Matthew Kemp and I am 12 years-old. I live in Parrott Street, Cobden and I was also born in Cobden.

My mother gave birth to me on August 4th 2000 on our couch. I live with my Mum, Ang, and my brother, Nick. My Mum is 45, I think, and my brother has just turned 16. I did have a pet cat but she was either run over or poisoned. Mum went to pick Nick up from footy training and there she was, flat on the ground.

There are a lot of kids in our neighbourhood. We usually have a bit of cricket, play footy, or something sporty. We are always doing something. Some important places to me are the Cobden footy and cricket ground, Terang cemetery where my Dad is buried, the Camperdown cricket ground where we won the under 16s cricket grand final and the Koroit football ground where we won the under 14s footy grand final.

I love my home. My favourite would have to be our lounge room. Why? Because we have just replastered the room, put in a new television and a new couch, and now it’s all new. Also because it has all our iPod chargers in there and I’m on my iPod 24/7.

Some of my prized possessions would have to be our family photos with my Dad. Others are my Sherrin football, which I got when I was born, and all my sporting equipment or sporting clothes that I have had signed.

In my spare time I like to watch a lot of TV with my favourite TV show being ‘Home and Away’. Other things I do in my spare time are play games like footy and cricket with my mates or just have a joke with them. I also like to play against my brother in backyard cricket, basketball and, sometimes, tennis. We are both very competitive. My favourite food is McDonalds.

My favourite place to go on holidays is Queensland. I have only been there once but I loved it! My Nan lives up there so hopefully I can go up and see her a few more times in my life.

My favourite subjects at school are sport, PE, art, graphics, wood, metal and textiles. In the future I hope to be able to have a career in sport. I want to play AFL or have something to do with the AFL, or with another sport like cricket, tennis or basketball. In the mean time I want to become a builder or something around those lines.



Introducing Matthew Kemp

COBDEN CALENDAR

March

16th-17th South Western District Restoration Group rally, SWAP meet and auction, 10am, hot food and refreshments, Saturday night meals \$10. Helen Smith - 55951258.
18th 7.30pm CopRice Spring Festival, Heytesbury Room.
24th 1.30pm Country Music afternoon, Senior Citizens Hall.
26th 10.30am Blume’s Fashions, UC Hall, \$8 includes lunch.

April

6th 1.30pm Hoy afternoon, Senior Citizens Hall, 5595 1693.
7th 11.30am onwards - “Meet and Greet” day at Cobrico Hall. Food available all day for a small charge, 5595 1231.
8th 7.30pm Progressing Cobden meeting, Heytesbury Room.

PAVING THE WAY!

Has your family organised its paver for the Lake Cobden walking trail yet? Has your organisation arranged its brick yet? Time is running out. A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to immortalise your family name or your favourite community group - all for a great cause! Contact Frank Martin at Cobden Home Hardware or Jo Beard (5595 1951) as soon as possible. It is hoped to lay the bricks during April.

Connecting Cobden - a Progressing Cobden Twenty20 vision project.
Registered email: kelvin@swllen.net.au

COBDEN CHATTER

- “Our Circuite de Savage walking track is terrific but it’s a bit uneven in places and a bit dark at 6.30 in the morning.” **Jo McInnes**
- Cobden Business Network chair Trevor Clarke has been researching the early years of Cobden and has discovered the town’s name was changed from Lovely Banks to Cobden in 1865. ‘Tower’ says we should consider a Back-to-Cobden reunion in 2015 to celebrate our 150th birthday. What do you think?
- Why would an overseas visitor come to Cobden? “To see the cows, the miniature railway, the walking trail around the lake, to feed the ducks and appreciate the friendly community atmosphere.” **Jodie McKenzie**
- Received an angry email from a former Apexian – yes, Cobden did have an Apex Club for 40 years – asking why the site of the new Cobden PlaySpace wasn’t being referred to as ‘Apex Park’ in the media. Hopefully, this sets the record straight, James: the new PlaySpace is being established on Apex Park, the new PlaySpace is being established on Apex Park, the new PlaySpace is . . . hopefully, everyone knows now!
- “The farming situation does worry me. My family is involved in businesses related to dairying and I want to see things improve for everybody.” **Noel ‘Poly’ Andrew**
- “It would be great to have more people interested in our night netball committee.” **Neecey Robertson**
- Sydney will win the premiership again. Kurt Tippett will make them even stronger and we all hope Gary Rohan comes back hard and gives them even more drive.” **Adrian ‘Slasher’ Kelly**
- Our Business Network is still seeking a logo and a slogan. Local schools are being approached but the Cobden Country Gifts and Sweets voucher for designing the best entries is available to community members as well. Competition closes Monday 15th April.
- “The Tigers will win the flag because they have the best side they’ve had for years.” **Frank Retallack**
- Consumer surveys are about to hit the streets of Cobden and district. The CBN wants feedback from shoppers (and non-shoppers) about their buying habits. They’ll be distributed by email, snail mail to the surrounding district and by the Cobden walkers. No names are needed – it’s an attempt to get feedback so our local businesses can improve their service to district people.