

Past Student Keith Brown returns to visit St. Arnaud High School

Keith Brown was a student at St. Arnaud High School from 1939 to 1946, and recently returned to visit the school and the town that he grew up in. Keith has travelled widely upon leaving St. Arnaud and he has an amazing story to share. Keith's full story can be found under the Our History tab on the school web page -

<https://www.starnaudsc.vic.edu.au/>

Keith stated that he 'crashed out in sixth year', which required him

to repeat again in 1946. As the only student attempting sixth year, by default, he was appointed Senior Prefect and Dux of the school for two years running. On completing his studies, Keith qualified for admission to university to study Theology.

Keith's son, Phil Brown, accompanied Keith on his visit to the school.



Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow.

I was six years of age when I entered Primary School and twelve when I entered High School in 1939. The class then totalled 23. High School was much more organised and there were two 'houses' and students were allocated to one or the other to provide sporting teams to play each other or visiting teams from other schools. Behind the main school building was the Sloyd Centre where boys were introduced to wood working tools, while girls attended Domestic Science classes at another site.

But times were difficult. England was at war with Germany and Australia was increasing its military strength. Older students were volunteering for military service and those remaining were learning how to make camouflage nets, collect metal scraps for recycling, learn first aid and help collect donations for charities. In December 1941, Japan entered the war by attacking Pearl Harbour in the Hawaiian Islands. At the end of 1941, the class numbers had dropped to 7.

Compulsory military service was introduced for the defence of Australia and its territories such as Papua New Guinea. As a result, several privately owned businesses closed and students were needed to staff family businesses and to work on family farms. Students were encouraged to work on fruit farms in Shepparton during the long vacation. Food and clothing was rationed, as was petrol, and some vehicles were fitted with a charcoal fuelled gas cylinder in lieu of petrol.

At the end of second term in 1942, I applied for and was appointed to a position as a Telegraph Messenger at the Post Office in Donald, but transferred to St. Arnaud Post Office in 1943. The position required the occupant to work seven nights one week operating the local telephone exchange, and the following week delivering mail and telegrams. Telegrams were received in morse code and converted to script. Those from the Department of Defence, required the recipient to sign for the receipt since the text advised the recipient that his son was missing in action, wounded or had been killed.

However, the Telegraph Messenger had one day off after seven nights, and a half day off as he worked Saturday morning. With the approval of the Headmaster, and the teachers, I recommenced High School, attending each day when working night shift and a day and a half on the alternate week. Thanks to the patience of the staff, I received my Intermediate Certificate in 1943. In mid 1944, I left the Post Office, resumed full time study, and received my Leaving Certificate. In 1945 I failed Matriculation (Year 12) so returned in 1946 to attain this qualification.

Thanks to the teachers at both the Primary School and High School. I was fortunate to experience a wonderful career, initially as a Minister in the Anglican Diocese of St. Arnaud, later in the Department of External Affairs (now DFAT), and finally in Government House in Canberra.

Technology, none of which existed in the 1940's, has changed the world. Computers, mobile phones, ball-point pens, i-Pads, emails, ensure that current students have access to knowledge not readily available in the 1940's.

Whatever the future, I can only suggest to students that they do the best they can, with what they have, in the place they find themselves, in the time they have. Remember, we only pass this way once.

Keith Brown

Student 1939-1946

Chapter 12 : KEITH LYNDEN BROWN (1927 -)

Unpicking the past and knitting it up again in a shape that makes sense to outsiders is no easy task.

Lynn Sunderland "Charlie's Book"

There was nothing particularly significant about my childhood, save, perhaps, for the fact that I was born at all. Neither East Warburton nor Bendigo (although I was born there) play any part in my memory, so my childhood is associated solely with St. Arnaud. And, as my siblings were considerably older than I, my life was, in some ways, nearer that of an only child except for the love and affection bestowed upon me by my sister and brothers as well as my parents.

The difficulties of the Depression years were lost on me as I enjoyed bread and dripping, rabbit stews, and simple fare because I accepted it as normal. We were fortunate because Father was employed in a responsible position and, while his income had diminished, he had an income, and that, many did not have. Nevertheless, it must have meant a real sacrifice for my parents to open a State Savings Bank account for me in which they deposited three pence (two and a half cents) each week. I attended the local Church of Christ Sunday School, and my name is inscribed (or was) on the Honour Roll for attendance! I even won a book prize – "Heroes of the Flag" by Arthur Mee - that told the stories of brave British heroes: presumably intended to ensure the reader emulated their courage. I was given two pennies each Sunday – one for the collection; one to spend – and I enjoyed rolling one or other along the bitumen pavement on the way to church. On one occasion, one penny disappeared down a crack – it was, of course, the one intended for the collection!

Doug Phillips, a boyhood neighbour of the same age as myself, was my principle playmate and together (naturally at his instigation!) we managed to get into some degree of mischief. He remained in St. Arnaud eventually becoming a local business man and town mayor. Myra Sharpe, another neighbour, a little older than I, took me to school on my first day, and thereafter I walked by myself the mile or so to school and back home. I mostly liked school, except for the Headmaster who inflicted punishment by leather strap beyond what was necessary. With few exceptions, I remember both my primary and secondary school teachers with affection and gratitude.

In 1939, having completed six years of primary school, I transferred from primary to secondary (high) school. Later that year, World War II began and several older students enlisted in the Armed Forces. The war seemed very far away and did not impact on me other than my giving some time to knitting camouflage nets, or, as a member of the newly re-formed scout troop, collecting scrap metal, or participating in fund raising events to benefit the Red Cross or other charitable causes. Few children in those days went beyond eighth grade (second year high school) and most left at 14 or 15 years of age to work on family farms or in family businesses. Not sure what I wanted to do, I completed third year High School and commenced fourth year. In August 1942, I sat the entrance examination for the then-designated Postmaster General's Department as a Telegraph Messenger. The

examination was held in Donald, a town some 25 miles north of St. Arnaud, and I was successful in obtaining an appointment effective 17 September 1942. To a small town newspaper like the "St. Arnaud Mercury", my results almost warranted a scholarship to Oxford University! But first, according to the government doctor, my tonsils needed to be removed. This seems to have been standard practice and was a common operation. Chloroform, applied on a cloth held firmly over one's nose and mouth, was the only anaesthetic. It ensured oblivion by suffocation and involved dreadful vomiting when one ultimately awoke.

Moving to Donald away from home meant boarding. It was strange experience to sit at dinner with the recently-widowed Mrs. McDonald and her two daughters. Despite my nervousness, I tried my best to cut my roast beef carefully but the knife slipped and green peas scattered across the table. I felt like an utter idiot, but, following a moment's silence, both girls burst out laughing. The tension was broken and my stay with the McDonald's was wonderful. Another two post office workers came to stay also, and between us, we purchased a pair of ferrets with which we planned to make a fortune catching rabbits. I collected the ferrets from the railway station at about 2am one night, and released them from their travelling container in the kitchen intending to place them in a prepared cage. The ferrets had other ideas. The female was very lively and had excessively sharp teeth; the male was quite large but fortunately quite placid. It took some time to round them up.

Bicycle tyres and inner tubes were difficult to come by, so we stuffed paper into the tyres, made a box to carry the ferrets, made a trailer for one bicycle, borrowed a greyhound, and rode some 7 miles to Cope Cope to make our fortune. At the end of the day, we had three rabbits (which we had killed by throwing sticks at them), spent a lot of time trying to recover the ferrets, and had to carry an exhausted and footsore greyhound home in the trailer. Coming down the hill by the cemetery, a wheel flew off the trailer and careered down the hill on its own; the dog spilled on to the roadway, fortunately unhurt. The bedraggled group, with limping dog, three dead rabbits, and dragging a twisted trailer, walked the rest of the way home.

Work required that, during one week, I delivered telegrams received by Morse code transmission. I was provided with a distinctive uniform with peaked cap and an official red Post Office bicycle built for durability rather than comfort or efficiency. Despite the tyres having a thick, heavy tread, if ridden off the sealed road, they succumbed to punctures inflicted by bindii burrs. The bindii seed was the original design for a tank trap – whichever way it lay on the ground, long, strong spikes faced upward. Once the tube was punctured and deflated, there was no choice but to walk back to the Post Office, remove the deflated tyre, repair the punctured tube, re-fit it – and hope to avoid any further punctures that day.

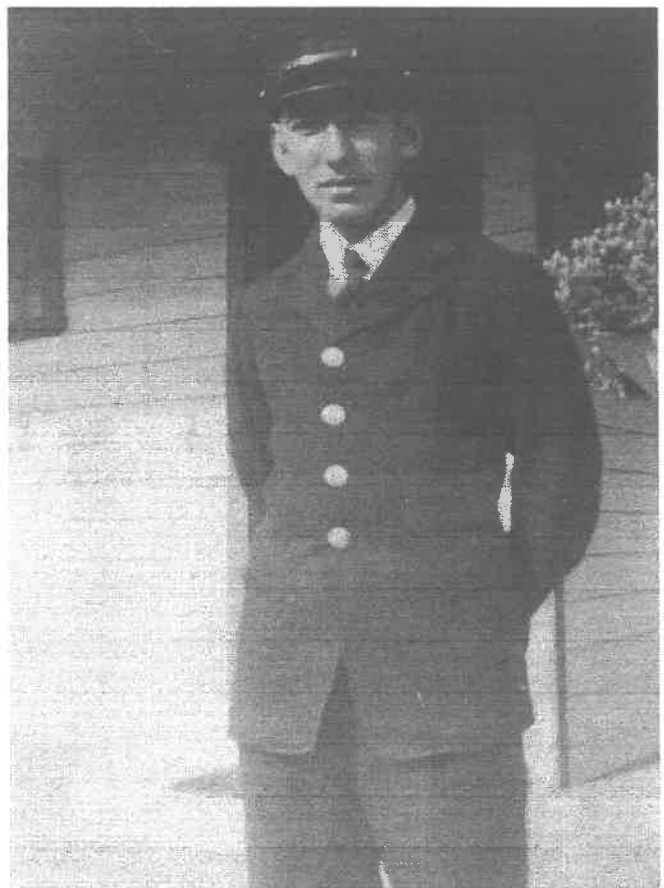
On alternate weeks, I worked night shift manning the telephone switchboard. The switchboard was equipped with rows of small shutters, each representing a subscriber or party line. Below these were rows of plugs each associated with one shutter. Pairs of cables, each pair with a control switch, enabled the operator to connect calls. When a subscriber called, the shutter fell revealing the number of the subscriber. One cord was then inserted into the matching hole, the subscriber asked which number was wanted, and a connecting cord then inserted into the requested number.

All local calls – other than those on party lines – and all trunk calls i.e. calls to or from other Post Office switchboards, were connected manually. It could at times become quite confusing. Each Post Office switchboard that shared a particular trunk line, had its individual call sign, for example three short rings for Donald, two short and a long for Bealiba. Calls for other trunk lines were routed through, for example, Mildura, Maryborough or Melbourne. Once manual connection had been achieved, the operator had to monitor any trunk line call for time (calls were charged by distance and length of the call) and, during wartime, the language spoken. Only English was permitted to be spoken on the phone, and calls were monitored for security reasons! Connecting local calls, trying to raise other switchboards to connect trunk calls, and trying to ignore party line calls (where several individual subscribers shared a common number differentiated only by Morse code rings e.g. 7H was four short rings; 7I, two short rings) could cause difficulties. Calls between subscribers sharing the same party line were free and it seemed every farmer telephoned his neighbour late at night to ask how the harvest was coming along!

As night operator, one was provided with a bed and was permitted to sleep once the number of calls eased off. However, a large and noisy night bell, that sounded once a call was made and a shutter dropped, usually awoke the operator, but it was known that some operators could sleep through such a noise. This bell would respond to any call – trunk line, local or party line calls – and lightning! There was no sleep to be had if there were a stormy night anywhere within about a 50 mile radius of the Post Office.



239. Above: A manual switchboard c. 1940
(Operators unidentified) Canberra Times 1999



240. Above: Keith in Post Office uniform
Undated c. 1945. Court. A. Bray

Whenever Forrie or Mervyn^{*} came home on leave, I tried to get to St. Arnaud. Two or three times this meant riding a bicycle the 25 miles each way – or at least one way, Father bringing me part way back in the Forest Commission vehicle, or my catching a goods train and travelling back in the goods van. In mid-1943, the Postmaster at St. Arnaud contacted me to ask whether I would like a transfer back to St. Arnaud. I accepted with alacrity although the work was the same – delivering telegrams and working night shift on the switchboard. The former sometimes required that I deliver a telegram from the Defence Department advising next of kin of the death of a son or family member while on active service. Many of those from St. Arnaud who died were known to me, and several had been senior students at High School when I was there. It brought home to us all that the war was much closer than we had appreciated.

One thing I learned quickly was that, if one were a member of the Postal Workers Union, the salary lifted dramatically, as conditions of service and salary levels negotiated by the Union, were available only to Union members! I soon became a member! Furthermore, the week I was on day shift delivering telegrams (and sometimes mail) I had to work Saturday morning and, as compensation, had Tuesday afternoon 'off'. For working night shift on the switchboard on alternate weeks, I had Thursday 'off'. As I was tiring of the life of a postman, I decided to return to high school part-time – five days a week when I was working night shift; one and a half days the alternate week. My teachers were most helpful but given my limited intellectual abilities, learning was mostly a question of commitment. I successfully completed fourth year.

The attempt to work and study part-time became very tiring indeed, so halfway through fifth year, with my parent's consent, I quit work and returned full time to school. Although my academic results left considerable room for improvement, I scrambled through fifth year but crashed out in sixth year – which I needed to repeat. As an older student, and the sole sixth former, I was, largely by default, appointed Senior Prefect and Dux of the school two years running, but at least I did finally qualify for University admission.

By this time I had decided to study theology. I declined an invitation to join the National Bank of Australia (obviously they did not know just how poor my maths were!) and, under the auspices of the Anglican Diocese of St. Arnaud, entered Ridley College in Melbourne in 1947. The following three years were full of interest and experience. There was much to study, and, as had Ormonde^{*} in his day, I had my weekend churches to serve – St Gabriel's in East Oakleigh, and, later, a church in Northcote.,

I graduated in 1949 with a Licenciature of Theology (ThL) and two units toward an Arts degree. In 1950, I was assigned as Reader-in-Charge to the Parish of Woomelang-Tempe in the north-west of Victoria. The parish covered about 1000 square mile of mallee country with six population centres – Tempe (where I lived), Patchewollock, 30 miles to the west, Speed and Turriff to the south, and yet further south, Lascelles and Woomelang, some 35 miles away. I was provided with a secondhand 1929 A-Model Ford (which I had to purchase over time) but, when this was out of action, I rode a bicycle or hitched a ride with one or other parishioner. When I had a leg in plaster (football injury) one family offered me the use of their car with

driver – and ultimately (in October 1952) I married my driver, Evelyn Johnson! On St. Thomas' Day (December 21st) 1950 in St. Margaret' Church, Mildura, I was ordained Deacon, and, on St. Thomas' Day the following year, in Christ Church Cathedral, St. Arnaud, ordained Priest.

What wonderful years they were - hard, sometimes difficult, but always exciting. In 1954, Evelyn and I, with our daughter Karilyn (born in Ouyen in January 1954), transferred to Quambatook for a few months, but I found it impossible to complete a university degree by correspondence. Accordingly, with diocesan approval, we left Quambatook and moved to Melbourne where Evelyn's father had purchased a home in which we lived, in Pascoe Vale South. I found employment with Robertson and Mullins, booksellers, in Elizabeth Street. This served its purpose but held little future prospect so, in October 1955, I applied to enter the Commonwealth Public Service, was accepted, and attached to the Colombo Plan Office of the Department of External Affairs. As this was located within the University of Melbourne campus, I was able to resume my tertiary studies. Our son Michael was born a day or so before I commenced duty with External Affairs.

Working with foreign students - mostly Asian -, meeting them on arrival, finding them accommodation, listening to their problems (and those of their landladies!), etc. was stimulating. Then, in 1956, the government decided to transfer those responsibilities to the Commonwealth Office of Education, almost all of whose employees were ex-school teachers with tertiary qualifications. With no alternative opportunities of employment with External Affairs in Melbourne, I requested, and was granted, a transfer to Canberra.

Prior to our move to Canberra, and with Evelyn's agreement, I used my share of my father's inheritance to fly to Hawaii and spend three or four wonderful weeks with Ormonde, Dorothy and family. On my return to Australia in January 1957, we moved to Canberra, rented a house, and 18 months later we were allocated a Government-built house in the suburb of Ainslie. This was to be our home, off and on, for the next 24 years. Our second son, Philip, was born in Canberra in July 1958.

In 1960, we were posted to the Australian Consulate-General in Geneva, Switzerland. For various reasons it proved a difficult assignment but one that was to prove a wonderful experience for all the family. After two years there, we were scheduled for re-posting to Singapore but this plan was scuttled when I suffered a gall bladder attack requiring surgery. The doctors recommended against immediate service in the tropics so we were transferred instead to San Francisco - a most agreeable consolation prize to say the least! Our journey took us first to New York City, then to San Antonio, Texas, to spend a week or so with Ormonde, Dorothy and family, and finally on to San Francisco.

In Geneva, I had been responsible for the post's financial, personnel and administrative arrangements, with some consular functions. In San Francisco I found myself responsible for visa, passport and migration matters - a welcome change but one with a steep learning curve. The section was somewhat disorganised and the workload was well in arrears. By dint of a few weeks of dedicated overtime by staff, and a re-arrangement of duties between them, within a couple of months we were all able to meet our workloads within normal working

hours and cope with any emergencies without difficulty. It was a really wonderful posting, a great experience, and we were able to travel around the western United States and Canada.

It came as a disappointment when, after some 18 months in San Francisco, we were assigned to Singapore. We took advantage of the journey to visit Honolulu, Tokyo (little knowing we would later be posted there!) and Bangkok en route to Singapore. Again, I found myself in a consular and administrative role. Being at the crossroads to Asia it proved to be an exceptionally demanding posting, administratively exceedingly busy, particularly with the onset of "confrontasi" between Indonesia and Singapore, and with a wide variety of consular problems. There was a heavy demand too on 'representational activity' – attending or hosting receptions, etc. Evelyn managed to contract haemorrhagic fever that made life unpleasant for her for a time, and Karilyn developed appendicitis necessitating an operation. We were really just beginning to enjoy Singapore, to make friends and to adapt to the climate when we were again moved – this time back home to Canberra. It was barely five weeks later that the Indonesians blew up the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank building in which we had our consular offices! Two bank employees and two passengers in the elevator were killed. Fortunately, although some of our staff suffered minor injuries, none were serious – but the contents of what had been my office were blown out of the window and never found! Good fortune attended my successor – he was out of his office when the bomb exploded.

My job for the next 7 years was to establish a Security Section within the Department of External Affairs where none had ever existed. The Section comprised two people – namely me, who was utterly ignorant of matters security, and a retired ex-Commonwealth policeman! Nevertheless, at the end of seven years, we had established a reasonable level of physical, personnel, communications and technical security within the service, and a working relationship with various security services at home and overseas.

The period at home had advantages. By the end of 1970, our children were well settled into school. Karilyn had commenced as a day-girl at Canberra Grammar, and we had extended and improved the house in Sherbrooke Street, Ainslie. Furthermore we had purchased, in 1966, a 40-acre block of land in New South Wales, just outside the Australian Capital Territory near Sutton, which we named "Katandra" – aboriginal for "Song of Birds". Evelyn worked in a stockbroker's office and this helped pay for the house extensions and the purchase of the property.

In March 1971, we were assigned to our embassy in Washington DC. We left home with very mixed feelings – pleased to be posted to such an important position but very sad to leave our three children home in boarding school. We much looked forward to the children's first reunion visit with us at the end of the school year and to the extent that we could, we travelled as widely as possible within the United States. For reasons of schooling, Philip had to return home but Karilyn and Michael were able later to stay with us for a time. We made many friends and grew to appreciate US history and politics. While there, Mervyn and Theresa Brown, and later, Alma and Arno Bray, were able to visit the United States and spend a little time with us and with their US family relatives.

*MY SISTER

Four years in Washington D.C. (1971-1974) were followed by two years back home, and three years (1977-1979) in Tokyo, Japan. These too were memorable years, full of experience. Then came decision time. We were offered an extension in Tokyo, or a posting as Consul General in Chicago. After being away from Australia, and to a large extent from our children, for eight of the last ten years, we felt a need to spend time at home – a chance to “re-tribalise”. We were then invited to join the personal staff of the then Governor-General, Sir Zelman Cowen, I as Deputy Official Secretary. The role of the Governor-General is an essential part of the Constitutional structure of the Government of Australia. Though the office is largely ceremonial, the Governor-General is important in the legislative role of government, assenting (or otherwise) to Bills passed through the Parliament, ensuring that legislation does not contravene existing laws, and (rarely!) exercising his power to dismiss a government! The Office of the Governor-General operates independently of Executive government, except financially.

Our initial attachment to the Office of the Governor-General was for a period of three years, but we were requested to stay longer following the appointment of Sir Ninian Stephen as Governor-General in 1982. As I had always intended to retire at age 60, I took long service leave in September 1987, and retired with effect from 26 October 1987.

We had built a home on “Katandra” during 1980. Our son Michael designed the house and was largely responsible for its construction, although all the family contributed one way or another in its completion and development. Evelyn and I were involved in local Sutton district activities – namely, the Sutton Bush Fire Brigade, and the Sutton and District Community Association (Evelyn initiated a weekly Art and Craft Group). Evelyn had also been active with the Canberra Senior Citizens Club conducting weekly art classes for some 20 years, and was involved with the Canberra Art Workshop and the Queanbeyan Art Society. My interest lay in family history and its accompanying research. In 2002, we reluctantly decided to sell “Katandra”, and in February 2003 we moved into Canberra. The call of the bush proved too strong, and, in 2004, we purchased a 200-acre bush block at Dalton – some 70 kms from Canberra, where we are currently planning to build among the gum trees.



241. Above: The private home at 438 High St., Golden Square, Bendigo, which, in 1927, was Nurse Coombes' Private Hospital where Keith was born. Photo. September 2001

St. Arnaud Mercury
8 September 1942

KEITH BROWN'S SUCCESS

Fourth Highest in State

Keith Brown, son of Mr and Mrs F.H. Brown, Dundas street, St Arnaud, has been very successful in an entrance examination conducted by the PMG's Department. There were about 94 lads from all parts of Victoria who took part, and it is a very excellent performance to come fourth in the State with 362 marks, the highest being 374. The examination was held in Donald, and in due course Keith will receive a call to that Post Office. He was educated at the St Arnaud High School, and all will join in congratulating him.

.....

St. Arnaud Mercury
28 January 1947

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT GAINS MATRICULATION

It has been announced by the University of Melbourne that Keith Brown, a student of the St Arnaud High School, was successful in passing his matriculation examination ... This is an outstanding success and reflects great credit on the student and the teachers of the school. Keith, who was senior prefect, was also dux of the school last year..... He is a son of Mr and Mrs F. Brown, Millett Street

.....

St. Arnaud Mercury
25 July 1947

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT'S SUCCESS

Recent statistics published by the Melbourne University reveal the excellence of the results obtained by Keith Brown at the Matriculation Examination last year. Keith was one of 31 who obtained 1st Honours in English Expression out of 1950 boys; one of 76 boys who obtained 1st or 2nd Honours in English Literature out of 451 boys; and one of 79 boys who obtained 1st or 2nd Honours in French out of 298 boys.

.....

St Arnaud Mercury
3 June 1947

Mr Keith Brown, son of Mr and Mrs F. Brown, Millett street, returns to Melbourne on Friday to resume study at Ridley College. He has been spending a fortnight's vacation at St. Arnaud.

.....

St Arnaud Mercury
15 February 1949

Mr Keith Brown, son of Mr and Mrs F. Brown, Millett street, and now of Ridley College, conducted the services at St. Georges' Church of England, Donald, and at Cope Cope on Sunday. He was accompanied to Donald by Messrs Kevin Curnow and Alan Appleby, of Ridley College.

.....

The St Arnaud Churchman
1 June 1950

Mr Keith L. Brown, at present Reader in Charge of the Woomelang Tempy District, and who obtained second class honours in the T.H.L. examination at Ridley College at the last examination, has been awarded the "Francis Fairweather Prize." This coveted distinction is given to the student who, in the opinion of the Principal, has (a) profited most from the College during his course, and (b) has given most to the College in character and influence. We offer Mr Brown our warmest congratulations on gaining this distinction.

.....

The St Arnaud Mercury
25 September 1951

The engagement has been announced of Evelyn Isobel, elder daughter of Mr and Mrs W.F. Johnson, of Turriff, and the Rev. Keith Brown, son of Mr and Mrs F. Brown, Daylesford, and formerly of St Arnaud. Mr Brown is in charge of the Parochial District of Woomelang-Tempy.

.....

will be.

They gained further knowledge of the region's troubles at a lunch at Sea Lake Civic Centre, hosted by Wychebrook Shire Council, before heading off to Woolmealong where they were given a civic reception.

From there it was up the highway to Turfitt the most important stop of the day for a member of the party.

Mrs Evelyn Brown, wife of Sir Ninian's private secretary Mr. Keith Brown, was born at Turfitt East and was courted by her husband when he was Anglican rector for the Woolmealong-Tempy parish.

About 15 people gathered at Doug Torpey's Mallee Museum to welcome the party, and at least 14 seemed to remember Mrs Brown and her husband. So while the former district residents caught up on old times with the locals, Sir Ninian and Lady Valery took the time to examine Mr Torpey's collection of old farming implements and historic memorabilia.

And Sir Ninian found time for a chin-wag with Turfitt's resident wag, Doug's father, Angus.

As dry as the surrounding Mallee paddocks, he answered Sir Ninian's inquiry as to Turfitt's population with: "You're talking to three of them now!"

"About 10 cuts it out," Angus told the Governor-General.

Sir Ninian mentioned there was a Tur-

Mrs Brown said it was wonderful to return to Turfitt and particularly the old church which her father, Walter, had helped to construct.

She praised the efforts of the Torpeys in keeping the Mallee's hallrooms where the young people used to meet.

"It's much better to have them here, than taken away somewhere else," she said.

"It's a wonderful heritage we should be proud to have."

The old church also had special memories for her husband.

Mr Brown recalled the day the church was consecrated in the early 1930s when he unfortunately could not take an official part in proceedings.

"I'd torn ligaments the day before playing football for Tempy and had to sit outside with my leg sticking up in the air while Bishop James conducted the ceremony," he said.

For a young man who covered a vast parish by unreliable A Model Ford and pushbike, it was only one of many unforgettable events in a unique district.

According to Mr Brown, it is the rare nature of the region's people, which made yesterday's return visit so gratifying.

"They are something special here, they know how to stick together through thick and thin," he said.

Mr Brown is confident his "special people" will weather their latest storm.

"With their self-help approach, they are tackling their problems in a sensible and constructive way."

And it was at the vice-regal party's next stop, the self-help approach was graphically illustrated.

Sir Ninian's and Lady Valery's desire to chat with as many people as possible had resulted in their itinerary falling well behind schedule.

After arriving at Speed to be greeted by school children from Speed and Paichevollock, the VIP's were due to have afternoon tea and then rushed on to Tempy to meet that town's school pupils.

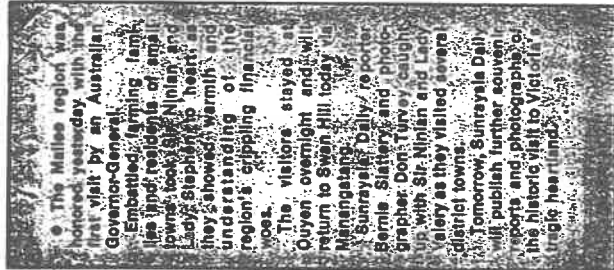
The youngsters had been waiting about half-an-hour and faced another 40-minute wait.

No-one was sure who, but suddenly someone decided to bring the mountain to Muhammad and Sir Ninian gave the OK for the fleet of VIP cars and a police vehicle to travel the eight kilometres to Tempy and bring the school pupils back to Speed.

The kids then had the bonus of hopping into the suppurous array of cakes and snacks put on by the ladies of Speed.

A presentation which did not go unappreciated by Lady Valery.

• Continued P4

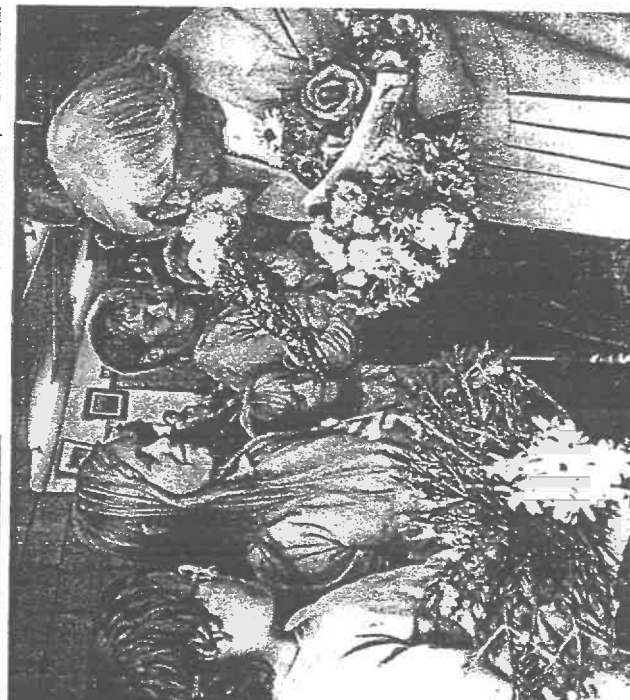


• The Mallee region was honored yesterday with the first visit by an Australian Governor-General. Embattled, farming lands and residents of small towns took Sir Ninian and Lady Valery to heart as they showed warmth and understanding of the region's crippling financial woes.

The visitors stayed at Tempy overnight and will return to Swan Hill today via Mansgarang.

Sir Ninian's and Lady Valery's visit was reported by Bernie Slatery, a photographer. Don Turvey caught up with Sir Ninian and Lady Valery as they visited several district towns.

Tomorrow, Sunraysia Daily will publish further souvenir reports and photographs of the historic visit to Victoria's "ragged heartland."



• Sir Ninian addresses last night's civic reception watched by Walpeup Shire President, Cr Bert Holland.

These Tempy schoolchildren had an unexpected trip in official cars to greet Lady Stephen at Speed. Her Excellency said she doubted if she had ever received more flowers in one day.

Governor in Mallee

• From Page 1

"Not only have we received a wonderful welcome, but we've been given the best scones I've tasted," she said.

The party then travelled to Tempy where they inspected the little Anglican church, which was Mr Brown's base when in the district.

He had great pleasure in pointing out his tiny dwelling next door to Sir Ninian.

The one-room dwelling still has an old church organ in the corner and as if someone was waiting for its former tenant to return for the night, there was even a Mallee stump in the grate.

Out the back there was an old timber dunny lying on its side and according to Mr Brown, the building once had a kitchen lean-to backing on to the bedroom-cum-study.

"The church couldn't afford to be too lavish as a lot of farmers around here lived in far worse conditions," he said.

After inspecting the church, the party headed off in the sinking sun to Ouyen for a civic reception and Shire of Walpeup hosted dinner.

But not before Lady Valery had sincerely paid the ultimate compliment.

"We couldn't have had a happier day," she said.

Sir Ninian told the civic reception he had a wonderful and instructive time during his tour of the region.

"What has struck us is

the enormous courage of people."

However, he felt Mallee people were facing up to their harsh problems the way they had in the past.

"But we know they are different problems," he said.

And he was aware that city people had recently gained a greater understanding of rural problems.

"We are now reading about problems in the Mallee. It's a healthy situation."

And Sir Ninian showed he had grasped the core of the problem.

"You have two millstones. One of ever-increasing domestic costs and the other of decreasing international prices."

The rector and the thunderbox



• Times might be tough, but you can still get a laugh out of a Mallee cockie, as Sir Ninian discovered when talking to Mac Edmonson, left, Stan Edmonson and Angus Torpey.

Vice-regals hear the funniest yarn about an outhouse

By Bernie Slattery



• Outside the tiny cottage which once served as Tempy lodgings for the then Rector Keith Brown are Mr Brown, Sir Ninian Stephen, Lady Stephen and Mrs Evelyn Brown.

The Mallee is not all wide open spaces as a young Anglican minister discovered about 35 years ago.

But when Rector Keith Brown found his path was unexpectedly blocked, he certainly had to describe it as a convenience.

In a yarn which would have tickled the fancy of that bush bard from the other side of the ecclesiastical fence, Father John O'Brien, the former Mallee parson this week told the hilarious tale of how he was brought to a halt by a backyard outhouse.

The Governor-General, Sir Ninian Stephen's private secretary is the one-time rector whose vast parish covered the Mallee from Woomelang to Tempy.

His means of conveyance over rough, dusty, unsealed roads was an old, often unreliable A Model Ford, and when that went on the blink, a pushbike.

Of course, Mr Brown couldn't cover the whole parish in a day, so he had a small one-room dwelling beside St Mark's at Tempy he called home when in the northern fringe of the parish.

According to Mr Brown, it was a pretty rough set of lodgings, with a lean-to kitchen at the back and a bush dunny down in the rear corner of the block.

As many of the district farmers lived in extremely harsh conditions themselves, it was decided the young rector shouldn't appear too flash. Consequently his lodgings were just as humble as his parishioners' dwellings.

Nevertheless, it was an exciting time for the young man in his first bush posting and he delighted in tooling round the district in his old Ford.

That was until the day the Ford took flight.

The rector was driving down the hill towards his little home when his brakes failed.

He veered left and at least had the cottage out of his sights.

Gaining momentum, he whizzed through the gates to the side of the building and continued downhill through the side yard.

Right on course with the dunny!

The rector had to make a quick decision.

At the back of the block was a ditch which would surely be the old jalopy's final resting place if he went that far. The only alternative was the timber-framed outhouse, solid enough to stop the car but not so unyielding as to render it a write-off.

C-r-r-r-ash! And the rector wrecked 'er.

He was able to reverse the Ford and survey the damage.

There it was," he said on Tuesday. "The battered frame lying on its side.

"And the can, sitting in splendid isolation."

So when Mr Brown returned this week to show his former lodgings to Sir Ninian and Lady Stephen, he did a double-take when he peered around the cottage's front door — to see the dunny again horizontal.

"It hasn't lain there all that time?" he anxiously quizzed locals.

They laughingly reassured him that no, a recent wind gust had upended the old thunder box.

Mr Brown and his Turriff East-born wife Evelyn displayed obvious delight as they showed Sir Ninian and Lady Valery over the tiny church and now disused lodgings.

St Mark's is still used regularly for services and its spotless appearance reflects the loving care of the Tempy congregation.



ST ARNAUD HIGH SCHOOL 1940

Back Row: Unknown, ? Brain, Frank Alexander, Sid Sloane, Bill Walsh, Alan Crone, Dick Gray, Harry Pamphilon

2nd Row: Teacher - George Baker, Unknown, Jack Oxley, Unknown, Gerry Marshall, Keith Taylor, Unknown, Ken Mc Donald, Unknown, Eric Andrews, Teacher - Darrell Oaks,

3rd Row: Ralph Birrell, Unknown, Bill Mc Donald, Unknown, Ron Finely, John Flynn, Graham Lester, Jim Higgins, Kevin Hines, Cliff Baker, Teacher – Fred Francis

4th Row: Ron Michael, Maurice Higgins, ? Gifford, Lawrence Hamilton, Don Perry, Lewis Mc Connell, Laurie Rice, Ken Mc Farlane, Ted Rickard, Eric Andrews, Don Smart, Unknown,

5th Row: Kevin Belcher, Graeme Fithall, Frank Medlyn, Bill Owen, Unknown, Doug Phillips, Unknown, Keith Brown, Peter James, Jim Tampion, Unknown, Lawrence Martin.