

In March 2018, Judith Lesley, Committee Member, and long time writer and contributor of news articles in the area, presented this piece to the "Boronia & The Basin Community News." The information shared here, is deemed worthy of being displayed for historical interest for the many businesses in the Alchester Village Shopping Centre. Our thanks go to the Committee, for their permission to share this article 'as written' on page 14 of Issue 264, March 2018, and the acknowledgement provided of such, from President Keith Cree. Our only errata suggested, is the owners of IGA for many years up to the last 5, were John and Julie Morris, but since about 2014, and up to now, the owner is Brad Munro. (Gary)

Alchester Village then and now: OR how well do you know your local Village?

Sited on a small area of land more on a level with the GlaxoSmithKline property to its north, Alchester Village sits at the base of low hills, and is now surrounded by suburbia. It is difficult to imagine the appearance when it was all country. Farmland subdivisions were recorded, and roads were cut through from the 1800s: H Sanders had a holding from what appears to be Dorset Road, in an easterly direction to the northern end of Albert Avenue (both unnamed) with its northern boundary along what was called Main Road (now Mountain Highway) from 1876. It is not possible to research the land ownership progression locally, but I am indebted to Knox Historical Society for early information; and to the recollections of several people established in the area over some years.

As Melbourne was developed, distances were measured from the GPO - with land beyond 20 miles being designated as 'country'. (A 20-Mile Post was noted at Boronia Railway Station during its reconstruction in 1998 but it mysteriously disappeared.) To purchase land in a country area was less expensive. Small holiday homes and big mansions had been built nearer to and on The Dandenongs from early days; but one development wave in this area began post WWII - on land assumed to have been farming land - but about which I have few details pertaining to the Alchester Village area; being more reliant on the memories of a few residents. BBCN Committee member Roger Thompson recalls that, in the early 1960s, on properties bought as house blocks (a number of the houses being built by Sloan Builders) on the hill to the south of the site of the now Alchester Village - through Pope Avenue/ Mitchell Avenue and further - daffodils were found growing. The lower land area of what is now Alchester Village was a nursery. This was from where the owners in this new area being developed from rural to suburban, used to buy plants for their gardens. The first shop was the Milk Bar.

Horses were long associated with this area. Before GlaxoSmithKline was developed towards the Dandenong Creek (on what is the north-west corner of the intersection of Mountain Highway and Albert Avenue/Colchester Road) horses were agisted there. On the north-east corner there were more horses - it had been a Riding School before the Colchester Park Estate was developed informed Gary Pope who has known the area about 30 years, working professionally near to the Village, and who has noted the development. Peter Lewis has worked professionally as a dental prosthetist within the Village for about 30 years. And on a recent Saturday morning, together in conversation, a picture of remembered changes in Alchester Village was recounted.

Subsequently, as an adjunct to this conversation; I referred later to the *Alchester Village Background Report of Knox City Council of October 2015* which records its recognition in part of its Purpose... the need to protect the centre's valued Dandenong Foothills 'local village' character into the future.

The hardware shop was an early construction. My informants remember Jackson as 'a dynamo'. *Knox News* of 3/12/1985 records Jackson's Hardware at 2 Alchester Crescent 'under new management with Brian Corcoran and family (Marlene and Phillip) noting that he sold giftware, handled mower repairs, saw sharpening, key cutting and dry cleaning. Ken Wotherspoon was the next trader here; a second Brian; and now Colin Broome who has been there from about 2008, working with Ron.

It seems that the shops on the west side were developed first: Council recording 'from the 1960s and into the 1970s. The shops as they appear today south from Jackson's Hardware are:

Mountain Thai Restaurant: the earliest person there



was Veterinarian Doctor Connell.

Alchester Village Florist and Gifts (with Vickie and her helpers): remembered as *Carolyn's Rainbow Boutique* that had a hairdresser (the name was possibly *Arkoala Hair Styles* - refer to *Knox News* 3/12/1985) behind it: 'often just a place to meet and get a glass of wine' Peter recalled.

Above the Florist is now *My Beauty Boutique*: this was Peter's Dental Laboratory and Denture Clinic from 1986 to about 1991 - before him was a dance studio; followed by AMP Insurance.

The Butcher was long established: not sure of the first one - possibly Bert Dolheguy and John Wallworth (see article *Knox News* 17/5/1989); but remembered are: Neil, then Ron, then Stan, then Sean - the butcher trading as *Alchester Village Quality Meats* who still cures his own hams.

Alchester Village Bakery has long been at No 10.

Alchester Village Tattsлото: thought to have been here earlier was *Peter Rogers Real Estate*, known to have worked in the vicinity - exact shop uncertain; there is a residence above.

Alchester Fish and Chips (hamburgers and roast chicken) thought to have always been there, with a dwelling above.

Royal Spice Indian Restaurant: when closed, is behind the roller door. Well remembered as the *Alchester Village Fruit Supply* and the tragic death at the Market. It was followed for a time by the *Steakhouse Wine Bar and Grill*, and then *Machan Sri Lankan Take Away*...

Alchester Noodle Bar was where there was once the Amcal chemist once known as *Keate Woodgate's* where there was also a State Bank Agency and photocopying facilities; and more recently, very briefly as a \$2 Shop. There was a medical doctor near to the Chemist, but exactly where/in which shop - is uncertain - so many changes to try to recall.

P Js Hair and Beauty Salon: was preceded by an earlier hairdresser.

Koko Lime Cafe was once a commercial bakery with the front window blocked from view. This site and the hairdresser next door were more recently used together: as a video shop opened by Gary Hayhurst, then as *Alchester Video* with Paul and Renata, from where it was possible to rent your desired video - before modern technology...

The Milk Bar at Number 24, with its own residence above, is now for sale.

Across the road is what Council refers to as the Eastern Precinct, which was constructed in the late 1970s; the largest shop is IGA. This store was early run as *Tuckerbag*, recorded in *Knox News* of 3/12/1985; it had been in the area for five years and had a delicatessen and a wide range of liquor; followed by *Taggart's Supermarket*. Brian and Patricia Taggart and their sons Basil and Gavin 'took over two years ago' according to an article in *Knox News* of 8/4/1986; then *Foodworks* with Pat and Peter. I was told that the IGA present owners of about five years are John and Julie Morris.

Next door is the *Boronia Heights Chemist*.

Next is *Alchester Cellars* usually referred to as the Bottle Shop: where once there were two general practitioners.

Charcoal Chicken, long established, *Knox News* of 17/5/1989 mentions Chris Nasser; Wally and Fifi well remembered for some 20 years and the queues stretching out the door. Once, while they were away on a holiday, the shop burnt down - but it was beautifully restored.

IGA, and some of these shops, used to have a public walk-through to the back car parking area - all were eventually closed to the public.

The Southern Precinct of the Village was constructed in the 1980s: Peter recalls that it was intended for professional rooms. The address of this strip is 30-32 Alchester Crescent:

Peter is at Number 1: the earlier tenant was a Travel Agent.

Next door is David Wilkinson & Co, lawyers; from where once the Salvation Army had an Office and issued food vouchers.

Shop 3 is Alchester Pizza, for which there have been several changes of personnel - probably the first remembered were Tony and Ellie; Nigel is the fourth.

Number 4 is TRAGZ which I understand was the first shop that was not used as professional rooms - this is a Hair Studio.

At Number 5; Dr Stewart-Holmes (who had earlier moved from the Western Precinct) transferred to another suburb a few years ago; it once was used by the GOD Squad (a Christian Motor Cycle Group); and recently there was a tenant with something to do with health and wellness: currently it is up for lease.

The shop on the corner with Albert Avenue is the Diamond Pavilion Chinese Restaurant.

Alchester Village is 'recognised in the Knox Planning Scheme as a Foothills Neighbourhood Activity Centre (NAC) and one of the gateways to the Dandenong Ranges... It has been noted that 'there are gaps in formal pedestrian crossings such as to the Southern Precinct. Within the 'New Schedule to the Design and Development Overlay', there is consideration to provide 'flexibility and capacity as needed for Alchester Village to develop and grow into the future.

Judith Lesley

