

GIFTS FROM THE PAST

The Kenilworth Historical Association, at its Annual General Meeting, launched a Gifts from the Past project. Included in this report is the first of those gifts - so we, in the 21st century, may understand the previously unrecorded contributions of many of previous residents of this district.

In post World War II Australia, European refugees were officially referred to as displaced persons. The Australian Government agreed to accept these people in July 1947. There were a number of conditions placed on the agreement between the Australian government and the United Nations who coordinated the Displaced Persons Mass Resettlement Scheme.

During this time, between 6000 and 8000 men and women were employed in Queensland. About 1000 were employed by the Department of Forestry. Check website www.forests.qld.gov.au/forind/forestry/forhistory.htm



Ukrainian born **Victor Fedorniak** (pictured left) arrived in Newcastle, Australia on March 6, 1950 as a displaced person under the United Nations scheme. Victor spent some time at Greta Refugee Camp prior to be deployed, along with a number

of young men, to Little Yabba Reserve at Kenilworth, where he was to serve out his two years as a labourer, this being a condition of his emigration to Australia. He had no choice in this matter.

Victor's first home in Australia consisted of a room that slept two people (very trying - if one snored). All cooking was done on a communal open fireplace with varying degrees of success. Ablutions were taken with a bucket shower and outside toilet. A lot of the men, including Victor, were invited into people's homes and this helped them settle in. English lessons were provided at the local school and this also made things more tolerable.

Forestry work was very hard in those days, everything being done by hand. The men, having come from war torn Europe were malnourished, and the hills were very steep.

Three years after Victor's arrival he married a local girl (Fay Dobson) and they shifted to the married quarters which

consisted of a three roomed building with wooden walls about a metre high and a tent top which was a lovely place for big green frogs and the occasional snake.

Victor enrolled in a correspondence course in Horticulture when he was given the position of assistant nurseryman, with the help of this study; he eventually became the nursery overseer.

Victor loved his work and over the years invented quite a number of mechanical gadgets for use in the propagation of pine tree seedlings. He could often be seen trundling off to work on his own farm tractor which he used for many years in his effort to modernise the pine tree nursery.

He instigated a lot of changes in the years to come and stayed as Nursery Overseer till his retirement. Shortly thereafter the Little Yabba nursery was made redundant.

Contributed by Fay Fedorniak

Note: Victor was also a valued member of a number of Kenilworth community organisations and was accorded the honour of being one of the first Kenilworth Living Treasures, awarded posthumously due to his untimely death on December 10, 1998.

The answer to last editions' Kenilworth Trivia Question "Why were flat sided cream cans first used to transport locally produced cream to the butter factory for processing?"

Flat sided cream cans were required to fit on the pack horses which transported the separated cream to the railhead at Eumundi for transport to Brisbane when dairying was commenced in this district in the late 1890's because there were no formed roads between Kenilworth and Eumundi - there was only a horse track!

Some responses to the query about stationing of troops in the district during World War II.

Jean Sandell recalled that some of the soldiers guarding the Italian prisoners of war held at what is now Kenilworth House (cnr Elizabeth and Phillip Streets) would visit her parents home.

Cliff Wilcox also remembered those same POW's being brought out in an army truck to work on his parent's farm. Cliff was also able to place the Field Engineers in the district because they built a navigation beacon on the top of the Bluff. The soldiers carried all their equipment to the top, cleared trees to mark each point of the compass (North, South, East, West) and erected the beacon - no mean feat with the hand equipment available to the workers.

Lenore Meldrum

President • Kenilworth & District Historical Assn. Inc.

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