

Renshaw reunion – Fitzroy Gardens in Dec 1985

By Mavis Mitchell

It was early in 1985 that my brother Albert, when visiting the East Geelong cemetery, located the graves of our grandparents, William and Maria Renshaw (See Appendix 1), and was distressed at their condition. There were wheel marks where a vehicle had been driven over the site and Albert felt that, out of respect for our forbears, something should be done to rectify this situation. He obtained quotes from a monumental mason for the erection of a proper headstone and granite surround then wrote to all the known members of the family explaining the situation and asking if they would like to contribute. Their response was excellent and the grave duly upgraded (see photo).

Because of the obvious goodwill of the family and following a suggestion by Audrey, Albert decided to invite them all to be his guests at a luncheon in the restaurant in Fitzroy Gardens, Melbourne on December 10, 1985. Not all those invited could be present, but for the sixteen who came it was a memorable occasion. Cousins met cousins and families who had previously either been vague, disembodied names or were not even known to exist happily greeted each other. Lila, Lindsay and his daughter Sandra, Douglas, Linda, Shirley, Dorothy, Noel and his wife Dawn and two daughters Melva and Sally, Enid and her husband Harry, Audrey, Albert and I were there and had a wonderful time exchanging memories of grandparents and other Renshaw family members. Enid added an extra dimension to the occasion by distributing to all the guests black and white sketches she had drawn of the flour mills operated by our grandfather. (See copies included in this book). Thus it was this luncheon became the launching pad for this history.

One humorous incident at the conclusion of the luncheon should be recorded for posterity. As Albert had originally ordered lunch for 20 members and some had to cancel at the last minute, he insisted on paying the restaurateur for the number ordered, whereupon the manager put the remaining serves of roast turkey, gravy, roast potatoes and other vegetables on a large oval platter covered with foil on which was shakily perched in an open-ended brown paper bag a large slice of cheese-cake and insisted that, as he had paid for it, Albert take it home.

After farewells had been said, Enid & Harry, Albert and I decided to view the "Golden Summers" exhibition of paintings showing at the Art Gallery. After hailing a cab, we were caught in a traffic snarl and didn't arrive at the gallery until almost closing time - too late to view the exhibition that day. There

was nothing else to do but walk the short distance across Prince's Bridge to Flinders St. Station in order to catch a train back to Geelong.

This proved to be quite a feat as the crowds were beginning to make their exodus from the city necessitating careful manoeuvring on Albert's part of the platter of turkey & vegetables. The incongruity of the situation had by this time hit home and the "giggles" had set in as we imagined that, at any moment, a flick of someone's arm in the wrong direction could upset the platter over some unsuspecting passer-by. However, after very considerable negotiation and skill on Albert's part, we all at last sank safely into the train compartment amid convulsions of laughter.

As the train sped off and stations whirled by, we suddenly realised that instead of the "loop" taking us to Spencer St. we were heading out in another direction altogether. So a dash out of the train at the next station had to be made and a trek over the overpass bridge - still with platter of turkey & vegetables in front - and on to a train heading back to the city and eventually on to a train to South Geelong. By this time, everyone was out of control as the situation seemed more and more ludicrous. After alighting at South Geelong and walking the half kilometre to Auntie Mabel's home, the platter was at last set down safely, and sanity returned as the cold turkey & vegetables were devoured and the events of the day related to Auntie Mabel.

