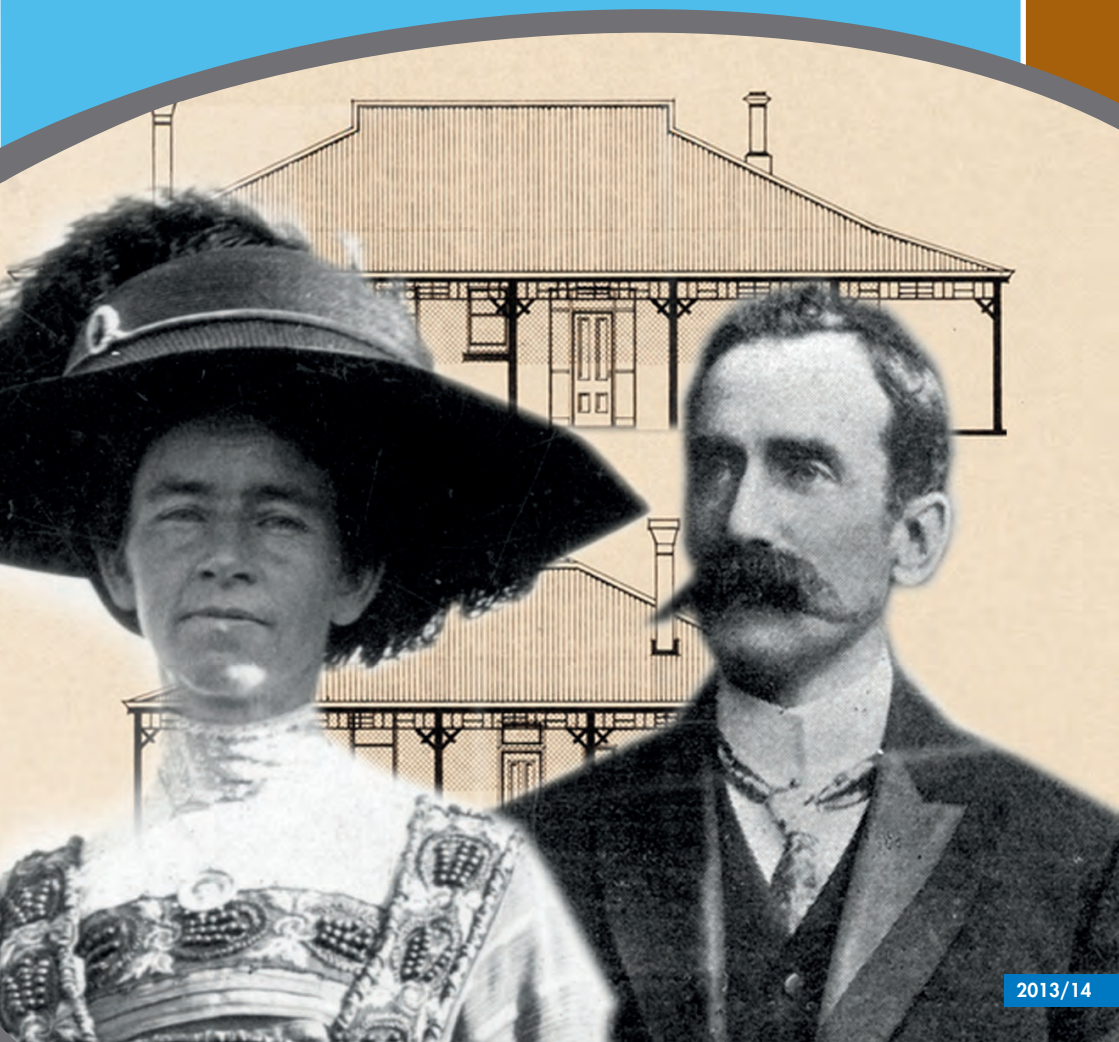




CITY OF GOSNELLS

HERITAGE

The Wilkinsons of Wilkinson Homestead



2013/14



Image (left to right): Mary Baxter, Hilda Wilkinson, John Wilkinson, Lucy Baxter in front of house.

Contents

Introduction	2
The Wilkinsons of Homestead Road	3
Journeys Across the Sea	4
Wilkinson Homestead	8
Emma Wilkinson (nee Tippet)	10
John and Emma's family	11
Lucy Wilkinson (nee Baxter)	15
Neil, Steve and Don: Growing up on the Orchard	16
Memories of the Orchard	18
Sketch of Wilkinson Homestead and surrounds	Foldover page



Image (left to right): Jack, Ron, Doug, Val. Seated: John c1930.

Introduction

Wilkinson Homestead has been home to the Gosnells Museum since 1988. It was however, originally home to three generations of the Wilkinson family. John and Emma Wilkinson built the homestead in 1912.

This booklet traces the journey of John and Emma's parents to Ballarat, Victoria, where John and Emma grew up, met and eventually married. The journey then continues as they move to Western Australia where John established a successful tailoring business with premises in Fremantle and Perth.

John and Emma started their family in Fremantle. In 1912, when their oldest child was seven, John and Emma built a home on the block of land they had bought from the estate of Charles Gosnell. Here they made the brave decision to give up John's business in the city and run their orchard as the family business, exchanging city life for country.

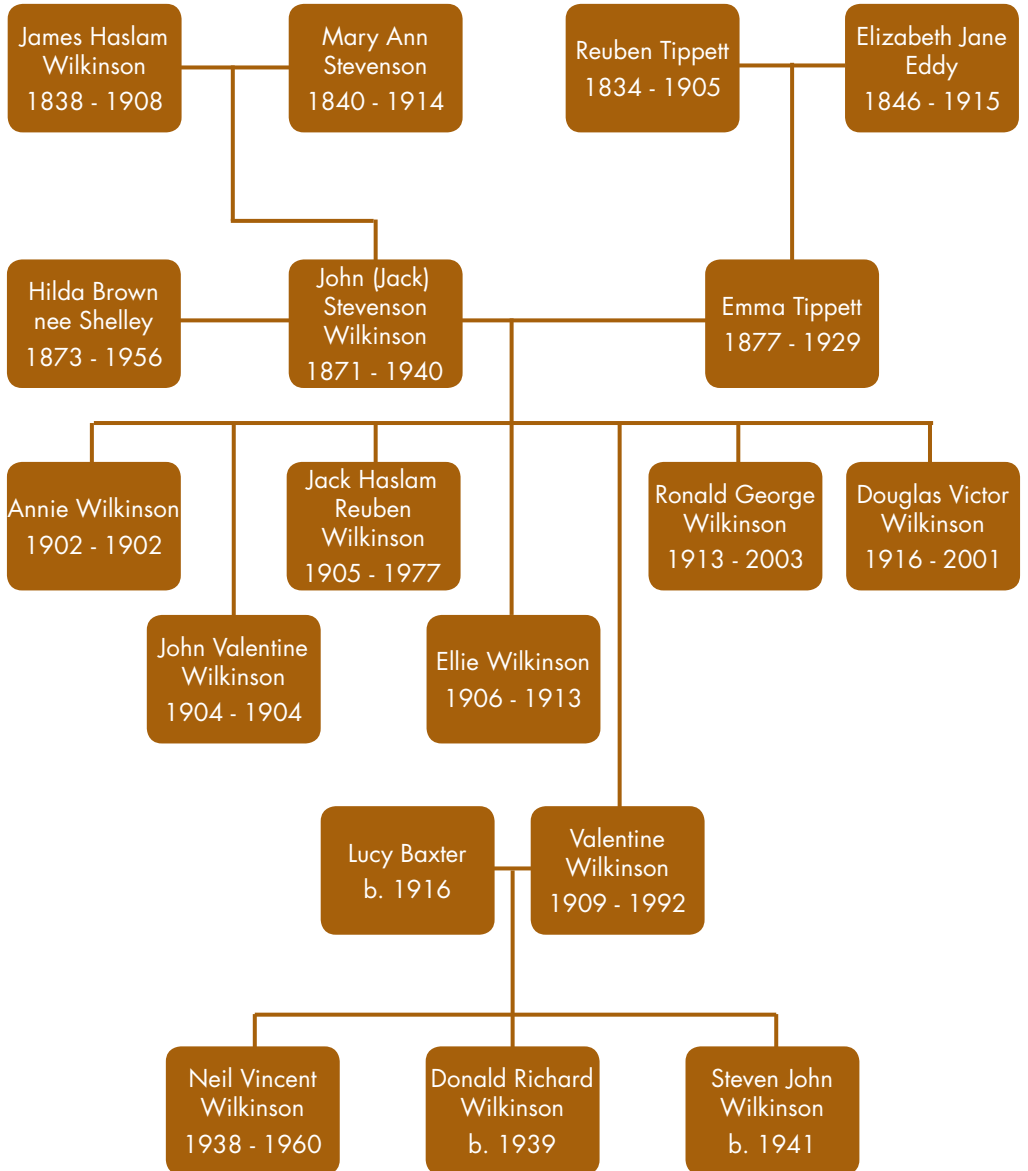
John and Emma's children grew up in the homestead, helping with the family business. Later, their son Val would marry and bring up his own family at the homestead, continuing to work on the orchard until the 1970s.

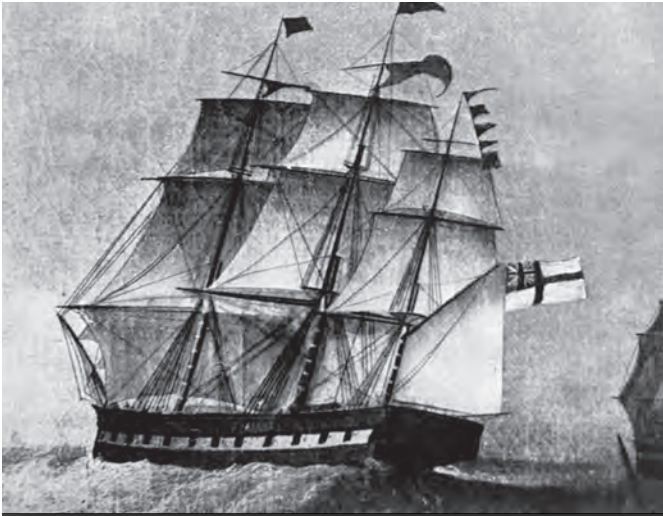
Over three generations, the Wilkinsons have seen Gosnells change from natural bush and swamp to 'the food bowl of Western Australia' to the suburb it is today.



Image: Wilkinson Homestead.

The Wilsons of Homestead Road





Journeys Across the Sea

James Haslam Wilkinson was the first member of the Wilkinson family to arrive in Australia. James, the son of a farmer, emigrated from Ireland aboard the 'Marco Polo' in 1863 and settled in Victoria.

In 1867, James married Mary Ann Stevenson, an Irish girl from Wexford who had been working as a servant.

Image: Ship 'MARCO POLO', 1,625 tonnes. Built 1851, St. John, N.B. (From an old painting.) Courtesy of the State Library of Queensland - digital image collection.

James took over an established grocery and spirits shop on Sturt Street in the centre of Ballarat and would eventually provide employment for most of his family.

His mother and sister, Rebecca and Elizabeth, set sail for Australia aboard the 'John Temperley'. The voyage took 83 days and they arrived four months after James and Mary married. Rebecca died in 1870, less than three years after arriving.

James and Mary named their second child, born that February, Rebecca, in memory of her grandmother. James and Mary went on to have five sons and two daughters.



Image: James Haslam Wilkinson 1838 - 1908.

Reuben Tippett, Emma's father, emigrated from Liverpool, England to Australia aboard the 'True Briton' with his wife Elizabeth and four children in 1866.

The children were aged seven, six, four and one when the family arrived in Melbourne. They settled in Ballarat where Reuben worked as a miner.

Elizabeth and Reuben went on to have seven more children although sadly their last four children died young.



Image: Reuben Tippett 1834 - 1905.

John Wilkinson, James and Mary's third son, trained as a tailor and moved to Western Australia in 1896 to establish what would become the successful tailoring business 'Wilkinson and Middleton'. He returned briefly to Ballarat in 1901 to marry Emma, the daughter of Reuben and Elizabeth Tippett. The pair returned to Fremantle to start a family.

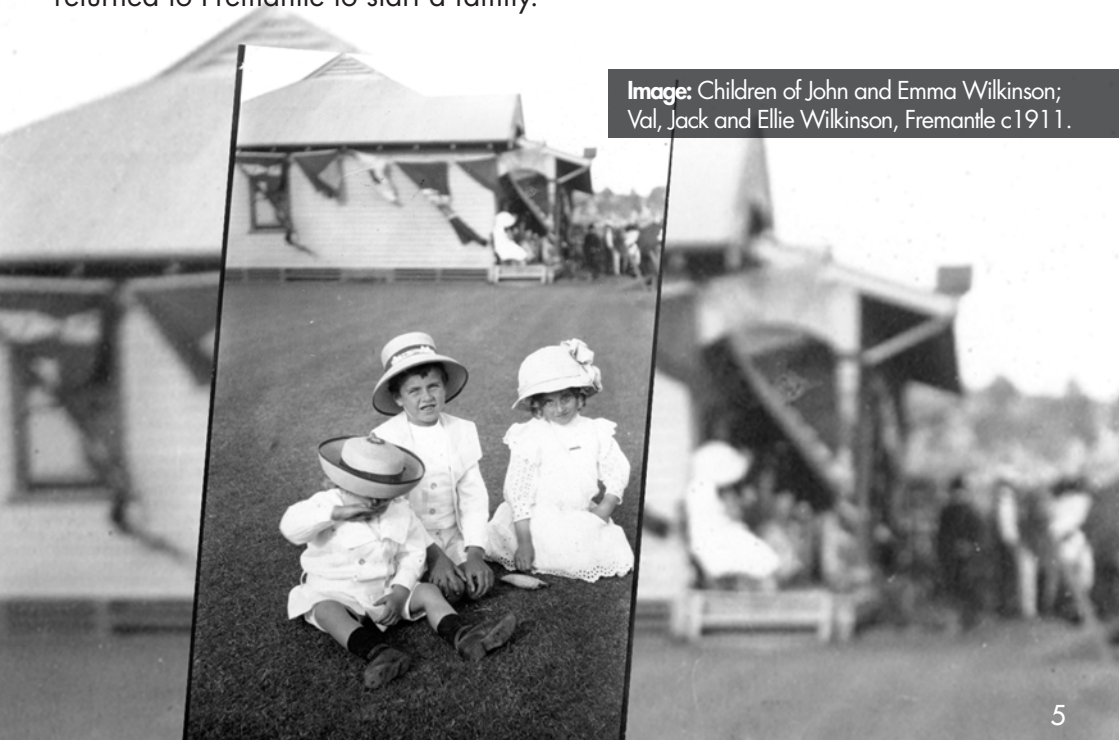
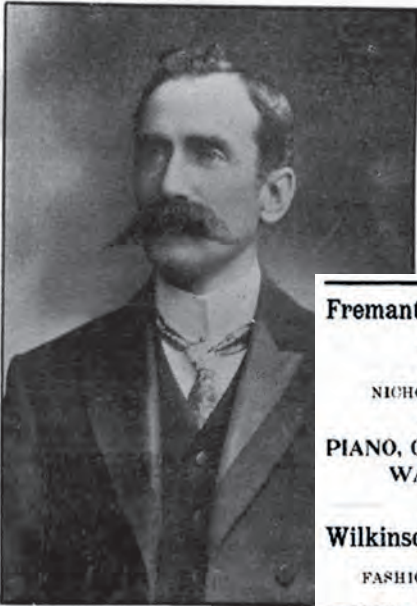


Image: Children of John and Emma Wilkinson; Val, Jack and Ellie Wilkinson, Fremantle c1911.

John and Emma Wilkinson, like so many others, followed a desire to live in the country, yet not far from the city. While their children were still young they gave up a successful tailoring business with stores in Fremantle and Perth to run an orchard and live a rural lifestyle.

WILKINSON AND MIDDLETON.

Among the most popular and best-known tailoring emporiums of Western Australia is the firm of Wilkinson and Middleton, of 92 High-street, Fremantle. Messrs. Wilkinson and Middleton have been in partnership for the past five years, and from the outset fortune has smiled on them, their efforts having been rewarded with a consistent and ever-growing trade. Both of the partners were apprentices



J. S. WILKINSON.

GOSNELLS!

BUY LAND in THIS FLOURISHING SUBURB.

Work in the City

And

Live in the Country

Fremantle Music Depot.

AGENTS FOR
NICHOLSON AND CO.

**PIANO, ORGAN, & MUSIC
WAREHOUSE.**

Wilkinson & Middleton,
FASHIONABLE TAILORS,
HATTERS, MERCERS, and HOSIERS.

FINEST SELECTION OF WOOLLENS
IN THE COLONY.



WILKINSON & MIDDLETON, HIGH ST.

PEARSE'S BUILDINGS, HIGH STREET.

Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not expressed in fancy: rich, not
gaudy.
For the apparel oft proclaims the man.
—*Shakespeare*.

J. S. WILKINSON

(Late WILKINSON & MIDDLETON),

Merchant Tailor, Mercer & Hatter,

98 HIGH STREET, FREMANTLE.

92 High Street,

Fremantle, W.A.

Dear Sir,

I respectfully beg to inform you that I have secured those new and commodious premises lately erected next door to the Commercial Hotel, in High Street, and that on and after Saturday next, January 2nd, 1909, the business will be carried on at the new address, 98 High Street, Fremantle.

I have a large and carefully selected stock of Tweeds, Coatings, Serges and Trousings of latest patterns, and have just opened a well assorted stock of Hats and Shirts of the best makers, together with a choice stock of Ties, Umbrellas, Gloves, Travelling Rugs, Gentlemen's Underwear, Hosiery, etc.

Thanking you for past favors, and trusting for a continuance of your confidence and patronage,

Yours faithfully,

J. S. Wilkinson.

(Late Wilkinson & Middleton.)

New Address:

98 HIGH STREET,

FREMANTLE.

Wilkinson Homestead

In 1905 John and Emma bought five blocks of land with half a mile (800m) of Canning River frontage that were part of the estate of the late Charles Gosnells. Living in Fremantle at the time, the family began planting their orchard of stone fruit, almonds and later, citrus.

They employed a builder by the name of Mr Pope to build their homestead, costing £2,000. The Wilkinsons moved into their new home in 1912.

Fruit flies were a constant problem in the area, and the citrus crop proved the most resilient and profitable. John continued to commute to work in the city until 1915 when the orchard was well enough established to support the family.

The 1911 Census recorded 1,295 people living in Gosnells. This did not include Indigenous Australians, as they were not counted in the Census until 1971.



Image: Emma Wilkinson on the porch of Wilkinson Homestead c1918.

GOSNELLS

SITUATED
11 MILES
FROM PERTA

TOWNSITES AND
FARMLETS

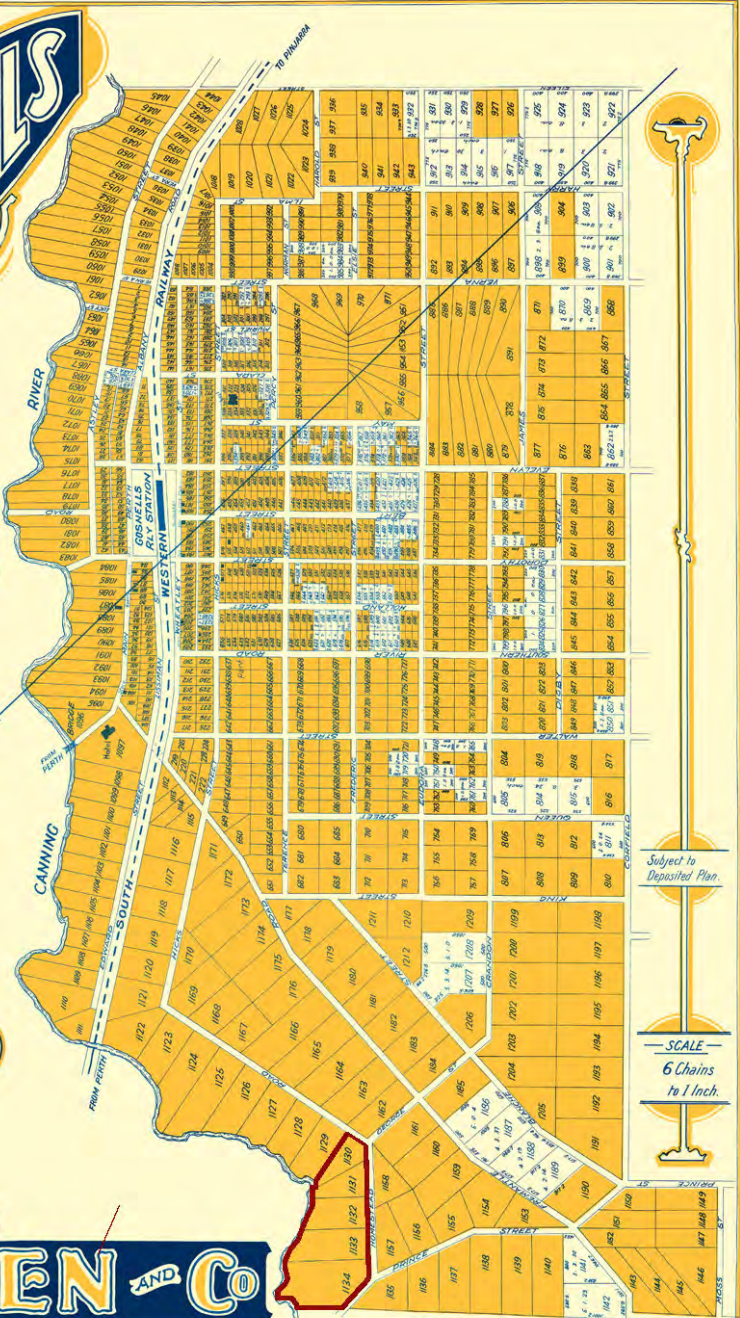
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FROM
£5 ACRE

TERMS
1/4 DEPOSIT
Balance Quarterly
Over 5 Years
Plus 5%

MANAGING
AGENTS

HASSEN AND CO

PHONE B 1266 34 WILLIAM ST PERTA



Subject to Deposited Plan

SCALE
6 Chains
to 1 Inch

All Blocks Coloured
Buff
are Sold

LEWIS STEFFANONI 35
Barrack St.
Surveyor & Draftsman

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Image: Blocks 1130 - 1134, purchased by the Wilkinsons in 1905.

Emma Wilkinson (nee Tippett)

Emma Wilkinson was a talented tailoress about whom we know very little. Emma's cookbook is one of the few personal items surviving to this day. Emma wrote down her own recipes and those she collected from newspapers and the local area over the years.

Among other family possessions was a photo of the homestead with the following note, an excerpt from a poem by Adam Lindsay Gordon, but signed as if it was going to be sent to someone.



Image: Emma Wilkinson with Jack, Ellie and Val, Fremantle c1912.

Life is mostly froth
& bubble,
Two things stand like
stone,
Kindness in another's trouble,
Courage in your own.
Emma Wilkinson

“ Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone,
Kindness in another's trouble,
Courage in your own. ”

Original poem - Adam Lindsay.

John and Emma's family

John and Emma Wilkinson had seven children between 1902 and 1916. Tragically they lost their first and second born children before their first birthdays. Ten years later their daughter Ellie died from diphtheria at age seven. John and Emma Wilkinson raised their four remaining sons on the orchard.

When Emma died in early 1929 a neighbour helped with the children until John remarried. Ron, 15 at the time, took over as the family cook.

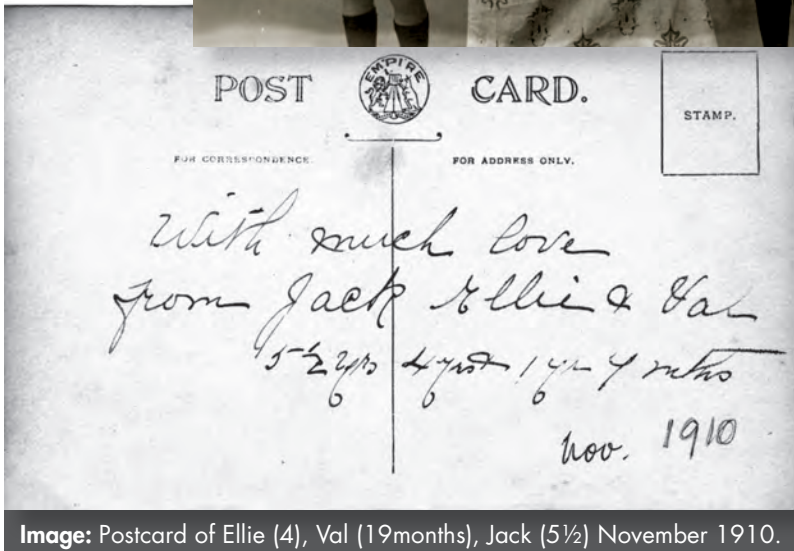


Image: Postcard of Ellie (4), Val (19months), Jack (5½) November 1910.



Image (left to right): Val and Lucy Wilkinson, Evyline and Doug Wilkinson, Thelma and Ron Wilkinson, Gwen and Jack Wilkinson.

Ron Wilkinson (1913 - 2003), John and Emma's third son, attended Gosnells Primary School and Perth Boys School along with his brothers. Ron enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) in 1940 as a Flight Engineer and was discharged in 1946 with the rank of Flight Sergeant. After the war years, Ron worked as a mechanic, something he had been interested in since childhood.

Ron married Thelma Wood, a Gosnells girl, in 1941. They brought up their family of three children; Nola, Graeme and Roy in Kalamunda and later, Cloverdale.

Interested in seeing the outback, Ron and his son Roy would drive his XP Falcon Station Wagon as far north as Port Hedland, exploring old mining towns along the way. He took up prospecting as a hobby, travelling east around Kalgoorlie searching for buried treasures. Ron returned to Gosnells and lived at Amaroo Village in his last years.

Doug Wilkinson (1916 - 2001) had wanted to be a school teacher, but when the Depression years hit he had to enter the workforce, finding work at the local White Rock Quarries. Doug moved into secretarial work and later signed up for Service during World War II. When he returned he bought a block in Gosnells with 27 acres (11ha) of Southern River frontage and went on to work at the Repatriation Department in Pension Payments for 30 years.

Doug and Evelyne married in 1937 and had six children; Catherine, Beverley, Phyllis, Dawn, Wendy and Russell. The family lived in two army tents while Doug built their home, his daughter Beverley states: '...with nothing more than hand tools and a DIY manual.'



Image: Douglas and Evelyne Wilkinson.

Doug had a long association with the Gosnells Bowling Club, serving as Secretary for many years and was honoured with life membership.

Doug and Evelyne lived in Gosnells most of Doug's working life and on retiring moved to Jurien Bay. In 2001, he returned to Gosnells after the death of his wife of 63 years.

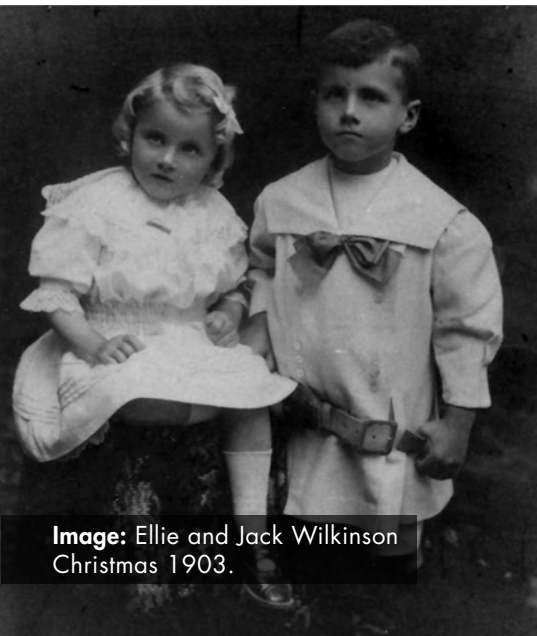


Image: Ellie and Jack Wilkinson Christmas 1903.

Jack Reuben Wilkinson (1905 - 1977) spent his early life in the family home at Fremantle, before the family moved to the Gosnells Estate in 1912.

Jack was a studious child who did well at school. Later he worked for T&G Insurance Society.

Jack married Gwendoline Daphne Aldrich in 1941. Jack was a man of strong faith and became a priest in his later life.



Image: Val Wilkinson c1965.

Val Wilkinson (1909 - 1992) was a keen sportsman who was on the gymnastic team in his teens and early 20s. He played cricket from an early age and was captain of the Gosnells Cricket team from 1931 - 1939. Val played tennis and bowls when he retired from cricket at 29 years old.

Val was elected to the Gosnells Roads Board, was a member of the Canning River Advisory Committee and was an active representative of the South Suburban Fruit Growers Association. Val was a devoted and diligent worker, quitting school at age 14 to work on the orchard. In 1936 Val married Lucy Baxter.

After his father John died in 1940, Val purchased his brothers' shares in the property. Val and Lucy brought up their three boys on the orchard. Val continued to manage the orchard for another three years even after they sold the property in 1968.

Hilda Wilkinson (1873 - 1956) (nee Shelley) met John at a Theosophical Society meeting. Mrs Brown was a local school teacher and had taught the Wilkinson children in years gone by. They married in late 1929.

When John's son Val married Lucy (Hilda's niece), John and Hilda moved to Hilda's Mills Road property. John would still visit the orchard most days.



Image: Hilda Wilkinson (nee Shelley).

Lucy Wilkinson (nee Baxter)

Lucy Baxter grew up on an orchard in Gosnells until 1930 when her family moved to Perenjori to live on the family farm. Lucy studied at Business College and worked for the Road Board in Gosnells and Cue. Like many women of her time she had to give up paid work when she married.

Lucy was involved in most aspects of running the orchard and family home. Lucy ran supplementary activities to the orchard which included keeping poultry for eggs and meat and growing cash crops.

When her sister Mary Kilmurray died in childbirth Lucy took on the care of one of her sons, John William (Jimmy) who had a disability from birth. To make room for Jimmy, the family turned their indoor bathroom into a bedroom. A larger bathroom was built outside on the porch. This new bathroom is still in use today.

The experience of looking after a child with disability inspired Lucy and Jimmy's father, Mick Kilmurray, to help establish an organisation to support others who had children with an intellectual disability. This organisation is Nulsen Haven.



Image: Val and Lucy Wilkinson in Perenjori with Morris Isis 18 July 1936.

Lucy was also involved with the Cricket Club and was Honorary secretary of the Red Cross, arranging fundraising and staffing the shop.

Lucy was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for services to the Red Cross and to the community in 1992. She was also awarded life membership of the Red Cross. Lucy was on the inaugural board for Amaroo Village and in fact it was Lucy that suggested the name 'Amaroo'.

Val and Lucy had three children; Neil, Donald and Steven.



Image: Neil, Steve and Don, Val (behind) c1941.

Neil, Steve and Don: Growing up on the Orchard

The boys lived a very active life on the orchard. They were expected to contribute to the maintenance of the orchard, with weeding, irrigation and processing of the fruit.

The boys would make the fruit cases from freshly milled jarrah, pick up the fruit cases or bags from the orchard and load them on to the ramp to be collected.

They all learnt to drive at an early age, around 12 or 13 years old. The first work utility was a 1927 Chrysler that started with a crank handle.

The boys were also responsible for chopping the wood and carrying it to where it was needed; the laundry, kitchen and lounge room fire places.

“We boys were often asked to take a billy of tea and a handful of Granita biscuits down to the pickers for their morning or afternoon teas. Mum must have had great faith in us expecting that all the Granita biscuits would be delivered.”

Steve Wilkinson, 2011.

Don remembers “...loading fruit onto contractors’ trucks, getting a good workout and displaying how much testosterone we had.”

Don Wilkinson, 2011.

Along with work, the boys remember their childhood on the orchard as a time of adventure and freedom. Don and Steve remember

“Cricket, football, swimming, canoeing and building forts up trees as huts or underground. Forts were interconnected by tunnels with boards on top covered with sand for camouflage (we didn’t want the fictitious enemy to sabotage our network).”

Don Wilkinson, 2011.

“The lupins produced an excellent playground for us kids. They grew to almost our height, just right for making trucks and playing hide and seek.”

Steve Wilkinson, 2011.

The boys adapted fruit cases to slide on grass slopes by attaching lino to the underside. They rode their bikes on trips to the hills or to swimming holes in the Southern River or rabbit trapping in the Thornlie bush.



Image: Don (behind) and friend in go-cart c1955.

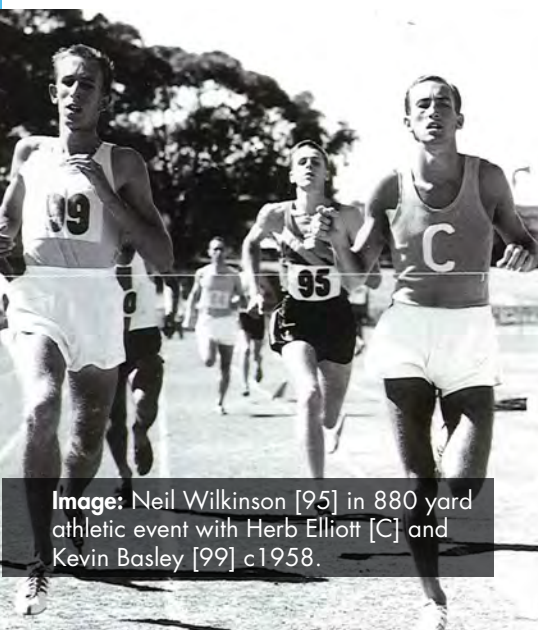


Image: Neil Wilkinson [95] in 880 yard athletic event with Herb Elliott [C] and Kevin Basley [99] c1958.

In the horse paddock, a cricket pitch was made by Val and Doug with the assistance of Don, Steve, cousins and friends using clay from the riverbank and a homemade concrete roller made by Val and Doug.

“When they saw us playing they often joined in...to show us how it was done.”

Don Wilkinson, 2011

Neil Wilkinson died in a motor vehicle accident in South Australia in 1960 at 21 years old.

Memories of the Orchard

Steve and Don Wilkinson share their memories of the homestead and orchard as they were growing up.

Please note: numbers refer to the map on the inside back cover.

Wilkinson Homestead (1) was built in 1912 by Mr Pope for £2,000.

The packing shed (2) was built in 1926, and an extension to the **packing shed (2b)** was built about 1955 to accommodate the new fruit grader.

The wash house (3) had wooden walls and floor and a flat corrugated iron roof. It had its own fireplace chimney and copper plus a twin cement wash trough. Later, electricity was added and a Simpson wringer washing machine was purchased around 1950.

The original pan toilet (4) was used until the 1950s. Val replaced it with a **septic toilet (5)** when he broke his leg and was no longer able to carry out the pan. The accident happened while Val was helping to remove a tree stump at the new Gosnells tennis court near the railway station (near where the Police station is today).

The original garage (6) was possibly built around the time that the first car, the Morris Isis, was purchased. This was likely to be around 1936 as the car was used by Val and Lucy for their honeymoon (see image on page 15).

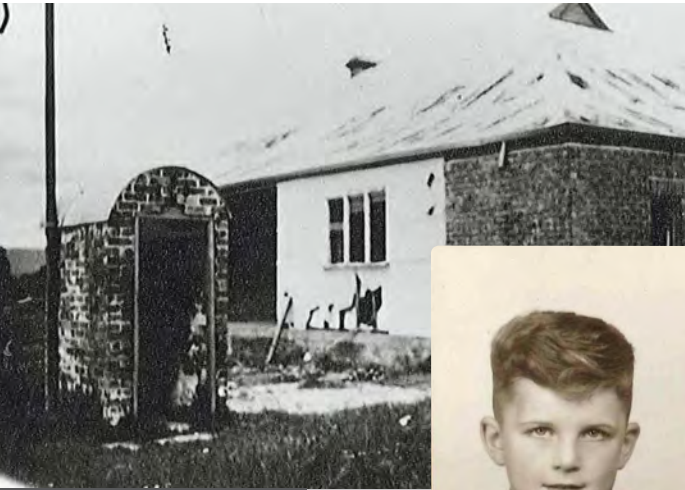


Image: Rear view of Wilkinson Homestead c1981 showing septic toilet.



Image: Don, Steve and Neil Wilkinson.

There were **two water tanks (7)** both mounted on a concrete plinth around one metre high and plumbed to the kitchen. Val lined the tanks with cement over a chicken wire mesh attached to the inside of the tank. Chicken mesh also covered the hole in the tank where the gutters drained into the tank and it stopped birds and animals getting inside....most of the time. A small amount of kerosene was poured on the top of the tank water to stop mosquitoes breeding inside. We knew it was time to dose the tank when wrigglers could be seen in the water. Each tank had a 1,000 gallon (3,785 l) capacity.

The **third drinking water tank (8)** was mounted on 12 - 18 inch (45 cm) logs at the north-west corner of the house (between the house and external toilet). It was not plumbed to the house but had a brass low pressure tap. The family used to fill a jug and take it to the kitchen for drinking water. It was a good clean tank.

The **fourth water tank (9)** was mounted on a wooden stand approximately 12 - 15 feet (4 - 5 m) high. The tank was filled from the river by a pump and was for all household uses except drinking and cooking. (see image on page 21).

There were **two weeping bushes (10)** half way down the driveway that are still in existence.



Image: Val with sons Steve, Don and Neil in front of water tanks c1948.



Image: The first water tank, one of the two to supply water to the kitchen.

There was a **loading ramp (11)** for fruit awaiting pick up by carriers on the road that led away from the homestead to the northwest. The ramp was erected around 1955. It measured about 15 ft x 15 ft (4.5 m x 4.5 m) with the height set at the same height as the truck tray. The loading ramp also had 44 gallon (166 L) drums of kerosene stored on it for the tractor. It was not uncommon to see water that had collected on the top of these drums turn to ice during cold weather.

The **machinery shed (12)** was used for the tractor. Steve Wilkinson also used it as his personal workshop when he worked on his own cars and motorcycles.

The shed measured 30 ft x 30 ft (9 m x 9 m) with a corrugated iron roof and asbestos walls. The floor was concrete with a pit for lubricating vehicles. Single-phase power was installed for lighting and to operate the arc welder and there was also a gas welding system.

The **stables (13)** had one bay for the horse cart, another bay for chaff, bran, grain and pollard and one bay for fertiliser in bags. The last bay was where the cow was milked. It also held the honey separator and was the first shed for the Howard tractor.

The **horse/cow paddock (14)** was quite an irregular shape and this paddock extended down to the river.

“The horses Ginger then Stumpy seemed to love being down by the river in the green grass, possibly hiding as it was a bit of a walk for us to bring them back to be harnessed up for the cart.”



Image (above): View of the loading platform (far right). Beyond this, is what remained of the cottage that the Wilkinsons had used as a ‘weekender’ before they built the homestead.

This photograph was taken by Steve Wilkinson and developed in a make-shift darkroom located in the fruit ripening gas room of the packing shed c1950.



Image: Don and Neil Wilkinson in a cart pulled by Ginger the horse c1942.

Homestead Road (15) was one of the few roads surfaced with bitumen right up to just past the front gate for many years (possibly as late as 1960) until the road was surfaced down to Prince Street.

A **clump of thin Japanese bamboo (16)** grew in this position.

The **woodpile (17)** consisted of sawn jarrah blocks delivered by truck, one load at a time.

We had a **small mulberry tree (18)** large enough for the boys to get stained each year. The children eventually worked out, or were told, that squashing green berries would remove most of the stains and evidence from their hands.

Jack Bancroft fabricated the **second garage (19)**, from the corrugated iron and timber from the original two bedroom house (see page 20).

By that time the house was only a single room, reduced from the two rooms that J S Wilkinson had built. The single room was called Castle's Shack, after the worker who lived there for some years. The garage housed an old 1934 Hillman that Lucy purchased for her own use around 1955.

The **poultry yard (20)** was built around the 1950s. It was reasonably large being approximately 40 ft x 40 ft (12 m x 12 m). Mum (Lucy) ran chooks, ducks and turkeys at one stage. There were minimal problems with foxes, only once did foxes get into the yard and kill some hens.

The **front gate (21)** spent most of its time open. It was re-swung at Calingiri where Don Wilkinson lived. It is probably still in use there today.



Image: The second garage can be seen behind the cars, which are lined up in order of vintage. The fourth water tank is beside the garage.

Sketch of Wilkinson Homestead and surrounds

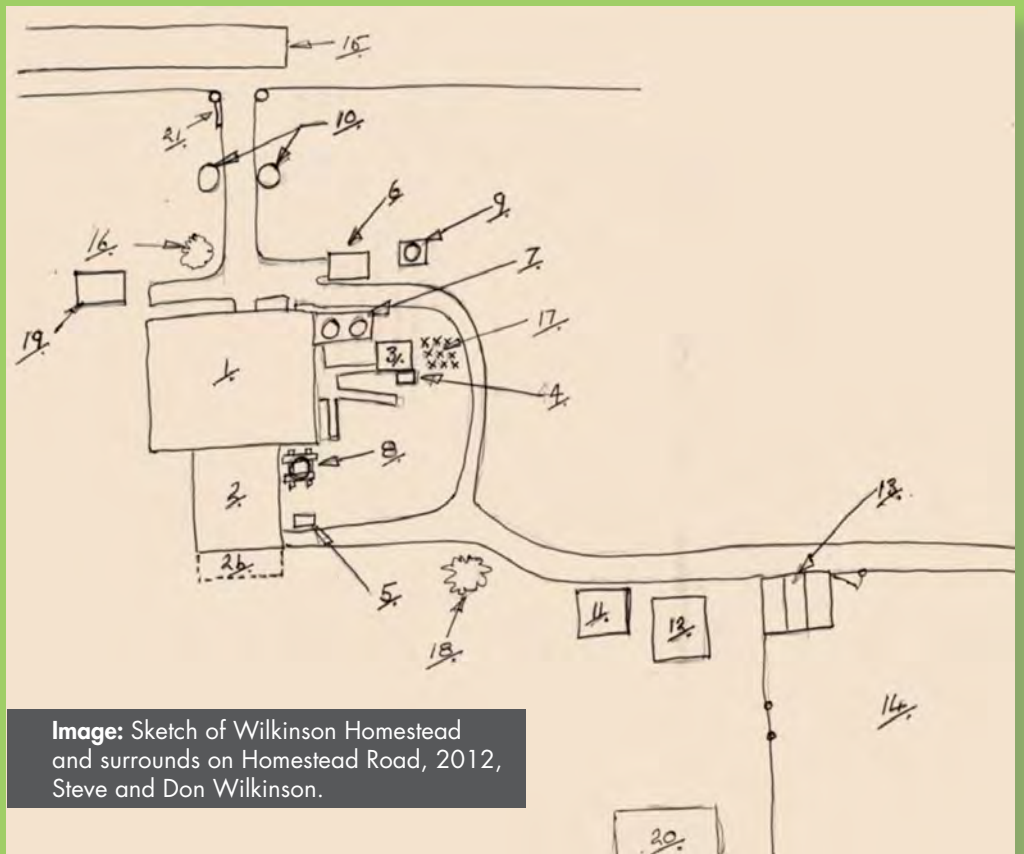


Image: Sketch of Wilkinson Homestead and surrounds on Homestead Road, 2012, Steve and Don Wilkinson.



Image: Wilkinson Orchard in the foreground and other nearby orchards c1930.

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