

## The David Hill Story

David Hill was born in Glasgow, Scotland in 1866. His father, John Hill was a foundry employee and his mother, was Jane *nee* Gordon.

David travelled to Australia and arrived in Monbulk searching for gold in the 1880s. He was an enthusiastic gold seeker and water-diviner. He didn't find much gold but liked the area and decided to stay.

In 1897 the Dandenong Forest Village Settlement State School was opened.

David Hill bought 14½ acres. The top blocks on what is now David Hill Road cost £2 an acre, while the bottom ones on old Emerald Road were £1 an acre. David built a little home of timber and bark. The house was almost opposite what is now the Monbulk Primary School Multi-purpose Room which is on the site of the original school house. Much of his furniture was also built from local timber.

On 16<sup>th</sup> January 1900, David married Emma Seamer who was the daughter of Henry and Maria Seamer (affectionately known as Blind Granny). By 1909 David was mainly growing raspberries on his land to sell at the market.

David was a Church of England vestryman and Parish Committee member. He also belonged to a 'Committee of Nine' which worked to improve conditions in the town. He was a main instigator in petitioning the Minister for a State School and was instrumental in obtaining 'Leach's Block', with its leaky humpy, for the school.

David and Emma had 7 children - six girls and one boy.

- Jessie who married Stan Crerar
- Elsie who married Les Engelke (Gleghorn)
- Hilda who married Fred Lane
- Stella who married Allan Coutts
- David John
- Esther who married Jim Brockbank
- Mary



David and Emma Hill on their veranda in 1910. This house burned down in the 1913 bushfires.

David became a Forest Ranger (Tourist Tracks Office).

In January of 1913 a terrible bushfire went through Monbulk burning down David and Emma's home along with the Mechanics' Institute, the School, the Catholic Church and many other homes. It also burnt all the fencing, crops and orchards. David, Emma and their seven children were left with nothing but the clothes they stood in.

After the fires everyone started again with great courage. Homes were built, the school and the Hall were rebuilt.

Just as things seemed to be settling down, World War One started in August 1914. David was too old to go to war so remained on his property gradually building a new home for his family.



David and Emma Hill's family. Jessie, Elsie, Hilda and Stella outside their temporary accommodation after the bushfire in January 1913.

In 1917 tragedy struck the family again. Young David Hill, the only son, contracted diphtheria and died on 14<sup>th</sup> June. Then on the 28<sup>th</sup> June baby Mary also died of the same cause. For precautions Stella and Hilda were sent to Fairfield Hospital.

Still mourning the loss of 2 of his children, David set off for work on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> July to clear the tourist track near Baynes Bridge where he was very badly injured by a falling tree. He was discovered later that night after not returning home at the usual time. He died later in the Melbourne Hospital as reported in

the Argus Newspaper. (below left)  
In the 1950s Emerald Road, was renamed to 'David Hill Road' in recognition and for the work he did for Monbulk.

David's widow Emma later married Frank Severino and they lived on the Hill land. They had three children together; Florence, Francis (Peggy) and Frank who died as a young man of 23 years. Emma died on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1956.

The Argus Newspaper Friday 13 July 1917

**TOURIST TRACK CURATOR KILLED.**  
**FERNTREE GULLY, Thursday.** Mr. David Hill, tourist track curator and bailiff, in the employ of the shire council, died in the Melbourne Hospital early this morning as the result of concussion of the brain and injuries to the spine, caused by his being struck down by a falling wattle tree whilst engaged in repairs to a track on the creek reserve near Monbulk, on Monday. He laid where he fell from about 2 o'clock until 8 o'clock at night, when he was discovered by Mr. C. Bally whose assistance his wife had invoked in her anxiety at his non appearance at the usual hour of return from work.

Dr. A. F. Syme, of Lilydale, was summoned, and ordered his removal to the city.

Mr. Hill's death is the culmination of a series of misfortunes which has overtaken his family. A month ago, the only son, 10 years of age, died from diphtheria, and a fortnight later the baby girl was lost from the same cause. The tragic death of Mr. Hill leaves his wife with four young girls. Deceased, who was aged 50 years, had resided in Monbulk from the early days of the settlement.

### Can you identify this family?

If you can help please contact us  
[explore@monbulkhistoricalsociety.org.au](mailto:explore@monbulkhistoricalsociety.org.au)

or ring Jill on 0417 117 101

We know the boy's name is Norman and the lady is his mother.

