

# Roundabout

## Monbulk Historical Society Newsletter



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### DOUG'S STORY



Doug Dickinson

Douglas Dickinson was the 8<sup>th</sup> child of 10 children to Arthur Dickinson and his wife Mabel (nee Berry). The family lived in Richmond where Harold, Joyce, Ken, Stan, Lorna, Norman and Eunice were all born. In 1933 they moved to Macclesfield Road Monbulk into Mabel's brother Arthur Berry's horse stable where Doug was born on the 12<sup>th</sup> October that year. Younger sisters Phyllis and Shirley were also born at in Monbulk.

They cleared land in the Patch, Kallista and Monbulk areas taking the larger logs to small local sawmills by horse. The smaller logs were sawn to make packing boxes for the fruit and berry industry in the hills. Doug's job was to look after the 3 horses used for snigging the logs to the mills. They were kept at George Seamer's property at the top of Seamer Road. Doug would arrive not long after sunrise, feed them some oats and then walk them to whichever property was being cleared on the day. That could be anywhere between Kallista and Silvan. By the late 1940s Seamer and Dickinson Logging Contractors had plenty of work and the horses were replaced with more modern machinery. Doug quickly learned about tree felling, tractor driving, snigging logs to landings, loading and driving log trucks.

By the time Doug was about 18 or 19 years old he'd saved up enough money to buy Anderson's International Harvester ute which could fit 2 or 3 motorbikes (usually Triumphs or BSAs) on the back. Doug once said BSA stood for "bits stuck anywhere" because they went like old rockets.

Doug was mates with 'Mac' Charlie McCarthy who owned and raced motorbikes. Doug laughed when he remarked "Mac wasn't much of a rider; he would fall off a wooden rocking horse once it picked up speed". Doug was a pretty good mechanic so would accompany Mac to the races. Mac's younger sister Heather would often go along to watch him race although she didn't like bike racing much. Maybe it was the tall, dark and handsome motorbike mechanic that was the main attraction!

After Doug finished his National Service in the early 1950s he returned to work for Seamer and Dickinson Logging Contractors clearing land around Silvan for the Italian migrants who had settled in the district after World War II. After some years the Seamer and Dickinson partnership dissolved and Doug joined his brother Harold to form HJ & D Dickinson Earthmoving. In later years after Harold retired Doug found employment at Caribbean Gardens doing maintenance work.

Doug's days as a free-wheeling bachelor ended on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 1956 when Doug married Heather McCarthy. Heather and Doug's family began with

Doug was born 3 months premature and was so small his mother kept him in a shoebox for the first few months of his life. In time the family moved to a small house in Silvan Road between the present day Wishing Well Nursery and Sylvan Glades. Doug attended Monbulk State School but according to Doug, the best thing about school was the "3:30 let's get out of here" bell when he would walk home and be greeted by Wombi his pet wombat.

Aged 13 Doug left school and became an apprentice butcher at Ernie Brothers in Sassafra. He much preferred the outdoors so it wasn't long before he started working for his brother Harold (Nig) and Harold Seamer who had formed a partnership as logging contractors.



Doug with some of his family

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Karen in 1957 followed closely by Mark, Maree, Kim and then Lisa in 1969. With 5 children in 12 years Heather was kept very busy.

Both Doug and his father Arthur were both members of the Monbulk Fire Brigade. Doug was the explosives 'expert' for the fireworks displays at the Fleming's annual bonfire. Heather also helped at the bonfires cooking hamburgers.

As the family grew, their home in David Hill Road became overcrowded so Doug and Heather bought land further down David Hill Road and started building



Seamer & Dickinson Logging Contractors' log truck

their new home taking four years to complete. Materials were sourced from a variety of local sites that Doug worked on including leftover bricks from the newly completed Catholic Church and timber from the original church. Doug milled the timber for the new home at Hughie Waterhouse's recently decommissioned mill; this included timber for lining boards, flooring, beams, kitchen cupboards and hand crafted window frames.

Doug always had a dream to build a mud brick house so in the early 1980s his son Mark designed a suitable floor plan and the making of mud bricks began shortly after. It was early 1984 when Mark was diagnosed with cancer and sadly passed away just six months later. Construction was delayed but Doug persevered and finally completed the house by 1988.

Doug, who was never idle, went on to build a barn for good friends Geoff and Elaine Sands as well as making furniture with his father's woodturning lathe and converting commuter buses for their 'grey nomadic' adventures.

Doug lost his beloved Heather when she passed away in 2015 and due to Doug's declining health he was unable to stay in his own home and moved into Emerald Glades in September 2018. Doug passed away in May 2021.

Information for Doug's story came from Maree Dickinson, Brian & Karin Seamer and Monbulk Fire Brigade's 'Go to Blazes' book.

### EXPLOSIVES EXPERT TO IGNITE MONBULK FIREWORKS

Well known 'powder monkey' Doug Dickinson of Monbulk has been given permission by the Explosives Division of the Mines Department to supervise the lighting of display rockets and fireworks at the Monbulk Bonfire and Fireworks display in November.

Before permission can be obtained to hold the display at Fleming's Nursery in Macclesfield Road, the proposed area has to be inspected and passed by an official from the explosives

department and rigid restrictions had to be adhered to for public safety.

To be held on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November this year the display will feature an increase in the size of the 'shells' which are a bomb type, sent up with the aid of a mortar. They burst into an array of multi-coloured stars high in the sky.

The latest type of stars available has been ordered for this year's display.

Costing only \$30 in 1970 the display has

skyrocketed to \$60 in 1971 and this year will cost a record \$140.

An AWA 11" portable television set will be raffled with the permission of the Attorney General's department together with a spinning wheel lucky straws, lucky envelopes, darts, knockems, a shooting gallery and money boards.

Hot dogs, pies, hamburgers, donuts, drinks and coffee will be available for those who wish to eat out at this great family night.

Free Press November 1972



The very popular annual bonfires held at Fleming's Nursery.

Monbulk, Kallista, The Patch & Sherbrooke  
Come and join us at  
Monbulk Historical Society

on a Wednesday morning 9.30-12.00 at the Monbulk Hub and enjoy reminiscing or hearing other memories of our towns.

Become a member and enjoy other benefits too.

2021 memberships fees are: Adult - \$20.00  
Family - \$30.00 & Students - \$15.00