

Working Together: Striving for Excellence in Belmont



Business is booming



Aerial photograph of Belmont river foreshore, showing a mixture of industrial buildings and older grand residences (c. 1980s).

Gardens beside the river

As Perth's population grew from the gold rush of the 1890s, there was more demand for foodstuffs. The fertile areas along the river could grow vegetables, while farmers ran dairy cattle there. A few ventured into the sandy country south of the Great Eastern Highway, suitable for pigs and poultry.

By the end of the 1890s there were a number of Chinese market gardeners in the Belmont area. Hop Wah leased land down on the river front, and there were another two market gardens along Hardey Road and two more in Belgravia Street, one of which was worked by Yee Hop.

These gardens were located in the swampy areas, and irrigated by hand with two buckets strung on a pole in the traditional Chinese manner. Human and horse manure (and urine) were used, adding to the already unpleasant aromas blowing across the river from the Claise Brook drain.

The Chinese gardeners faced racism from European settlers, particularly among ex-miners who had experienced anti-Chinese sentiment on the goldfields.

Mostly, Belmont's Chinese community ignored the abuse and kept to themselves. In any case, many of the gardeners thought of themselves as temporary residents, intending to return to China eventually.

While locals were regular customers of the market gardeners, the majority of produce was carried by horse and cart to Perth, to be sold at the James Street market. Here, the Chinese community met socially and dined in restaurants serving dishes from their homeland.

Eventually, a small community of European market gardeners, grape growers and poultry farmers sprang up. These included families such as the Garveys and Claydens, whose members later became well-known Belmont identities.

However, settlement remained patchy until the 1920s when major land sales promoted a number of families to relocate to the Belmont district.



Mr & Mrs Bill Skinner, market gardeners, Wallace Street



Grapevines on Redcliffe Estate property owned by Bart Clayden (1922)

An unusual shower

I was born in 1918 and worked on Dad's farm after leaving school at the age of fourteen. Dad's property was on the corner of Belgravia Street and Alexander Road.

To begin with, Dad established a small piggery in 1926 with twelve sows and one boar. We had two horses to pick up kitchen scraps from Perth's restaurants, hotels and boarding houses. A flat-top cart was used to collect the scraps in drums.

Whenever a farmer in Belmont lost a cow or horse through old age or accident, we were ready to accept them for pig food. Once we carted a big draught horse from the Belmont Roads Board yard. It was the middle of summer, so the weather was very hot. The carcass was considerably swollen and we had to leave it until the next day before we could tackle it.

When we did start, Dad suggested we stand well clear while he inserted a sharp knife to allow the gases to escape. Not being knowledgeable at my young age, I didn't move quickly enough.

The knife went in easily and deeply. The result being a huge shower of highly scented stomach contents. It isn't something one forgets and although I may smile about it now, I definitely didn't at the time.

In 1935 we invested in a new two and a half ton truck. Our first pick-up was a dead cow from the swamp near Rivervale Railway Station. It had been in the bog about a week and the body and hair had parted company.

Due to the state of the carcass, we decided to chop up the remains there and then, unaware that reporters from the Mirror newspaper were present. The next day's headlines referred to 'three people all armed with axes, chopping up a decomposed animal'!

Nellie Ogg (née Sutton)



Sutton's Piggery, corner of Belgravia and Alexander Roads



Sutton's Piggery, corner of Belgravia and Alexander Roads



Mayfield Poultry Farm. Land is now Gerry Archer Athletic Track

Mayfield Farm

Mayfield Poultry Farm had its beginning in 1930 when John and Julie Duncan had to sell their Pingelly farm for a pittance. The Great Depression had set in and there was nothing to do but start again.

They purchased fourteen acres of land in Cloverdale, where John built a house. Once the home was completed, the various sheds for housing stock and machinery gradually appeared.

For household use, a small orchard produced apricots, plums, oranges, mandarins, lemons, figs and grapevines including currants and sultanas.

The early 1930s were mainly concerned with egg production. However, when electrical incubators became possible, the farm sold day old chickens and fertile eggs to other hatcheries. John developed his own strain of laying stock and had a keen interest in small flocks of Leg-bar, Ban-bar, and Brown Leghorns.

To keep eggs in good condition for market, they were collected twice daily, cooled, cleaned and packed in wooden cases. These were then stored on shelves in a gigantic cool-safe. The hot summers demanded some cooling method, so John made the cool-room himself, working on the principle of the Coolgardie Safe.

One of the most fascinating places was the 'Brooder House'. This was kept warm by a boiler stoked with coke. Pipes from the boiler ran through the top boxes which housed the youngest chickens and back underneath, through the lower boxes, which housed the week-old chicks.

Children always have pets, but these were part of the workforce as well. The old horse pulled the cart and plough until machinery took over. Goats and a cow for milk and butter, and dogs for security and companionship. And, of course no farm is ever complete without a cat and kittens for the mice.

Miss M. Duncan, 1984

Equal with the clay

It was realised that large clay deposits near the Swan River were ideal for pottery. So in 1904 Belmont Councillor Richard Kirton opened the first industrial pottery to serve the metropolitan area. Although unsuccessful—Kirton went bankrupt in 1906—this business was to influence Belmont's development.

Meanwhile, Belmont saw the development of two more works: 'Mills & Co' and the 'Sydney Pottery Works' on the Great Eastern Highway. The latter was started by Charles Richard Courtland, who had first come to Western Australia for gold, and who had previously worked for Mashman's Pottery in Sydney. He went into partnership with Sam Pederson.

The company, which changed its name to Courtland's sometime later, was managed by succeeding generations of the Courtland family, and continued to operate on the same site until the 1980s.

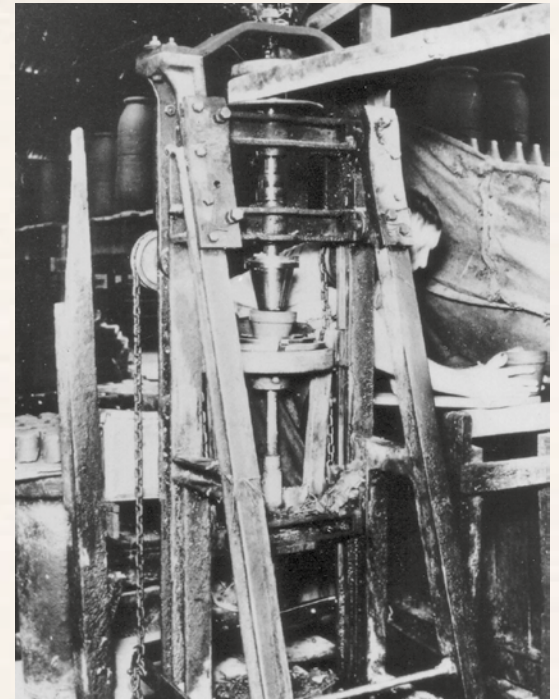
Sydney Pottery Works was one of the first in Western Australia to concentrate on the production of wheel thrown pottery, as distinct from building materials. Its main lines of production consisted of salt-glazed stone which was suitable for acid jars, pickling pots, bread crocks, basins and ten-gallon containers for brewing ginger beer.

The firm won a medal at a 1906 Exhibition for a colourful vase with the moulded head of the King. The same year, the Sydney Pottery Works was described as 'manufacturers of every description of pottery'. Most was made from the local Belmont clay, although clay for the salt-glazed ware had to be imported from Victoria. In addition, the coal had to come from Newcastle, because the local coal had too much ash which caused problems at high temperatures.

The glazed earthenware often included 'art wares' such as vases, flower pots and bird baths, with press moulded relief figures and applied ornamental decoration. These were glazed in a lead-based, 'majolica' type glaze, coloured with the various metal oxides to produce browns, bright greens and greys. Where the clear glaze was used, the body showed through as a rich orange-brown colour.

After World War II, Courtland's was reorganised to concentrate on flower pot production and in its heyday the business boasted a virtual monopoly on these. The flower pots had been originally made by hand, but Charles Grenville Courtland invented a pressing machine, operated at first by foot and later by hydraulics.

Other garden pots were hand-thrown on wheels. Courtland's continued to be proud of its well-designed products, paying particular attention to the firing, in order to achieve a pleasing and rich terracotta colour.



Machinery at Courtland's Pottery



Original buildings – Courtland Pottery



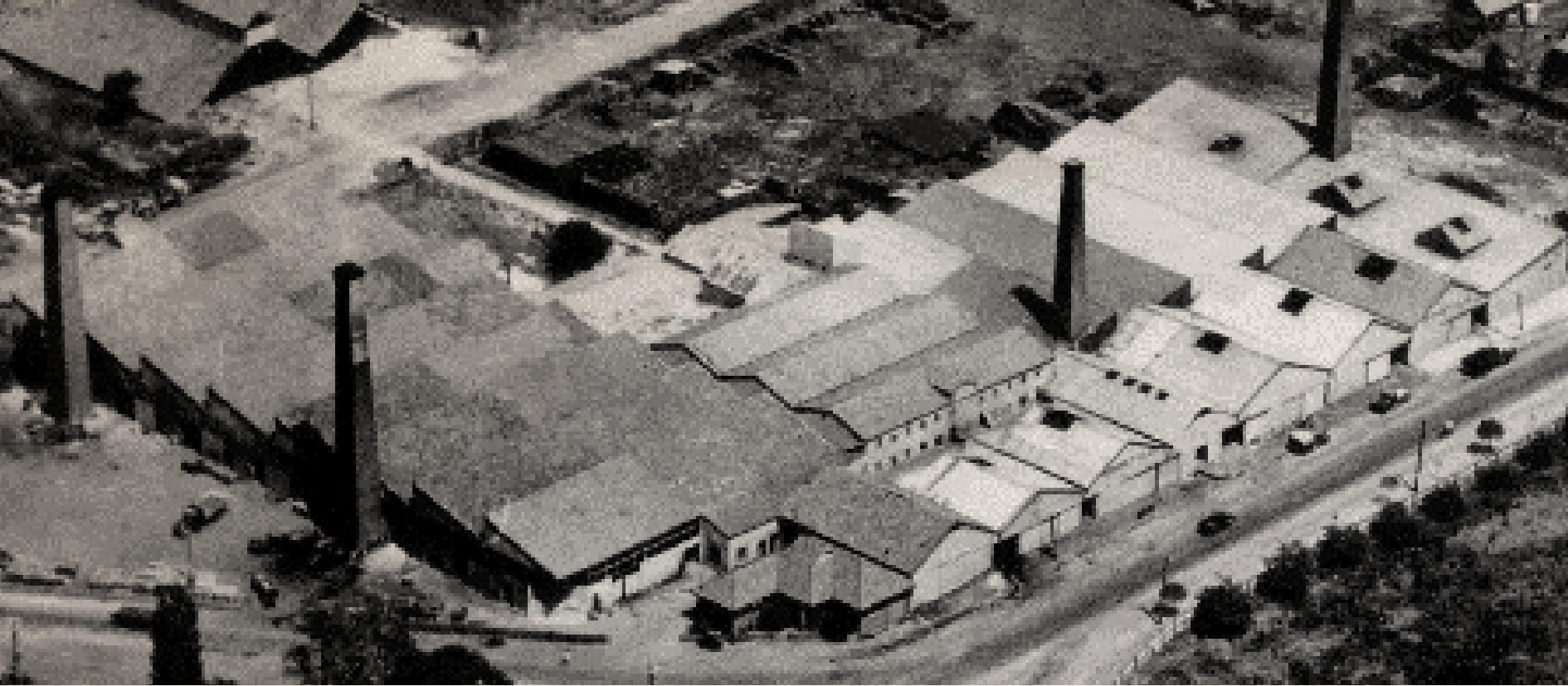
Charles Richard Courtland

My father, Sam Pedersen, built the house near the corner of what was then Guildford Road and Hehir Street. This house was on Courtland's Pottery Works property. This was when he married my mother in 1907, and it was in that house that I was born in 1909.

When he was married, he was partner with the late Charles Courtland, senior, in the Pottery Works. However, the clay consistently affected my father's skin, causing eczema and dermatitis, and he was compelled to withdraw from the partnership. I think it could have been before the First World War, about 1911.

My father then went back into the building trade and amongst other places he built around Perth and Belmont, he was responsible for 'Hill 60' for Mr Ryan; Mr J. J. Kelly's house in Grandstand Road; the first War Service home in Nicholson Road, Subiaco, and a number in Regent Street in Mt. Lawley.

Mrs M. Moore (née Pedersen)



Aerial view of Bristle factory at intersection of Matheson Road, Stoneham Street and Garrett Road

The Bristle Kilns

The firm of H. L. Brisbane and Wunderlich became one of the largest in the State, creating a diverse range of products essential for Western Australian businesses and homes.

One of the company's major contributions was to help solve post-war housing problems by manufacturing increasing numbers of terracotta tiles.

Other activities include the manufacture of glazed stoneware, sewerage pipes, sanitary ware, crockery, stainless steel sinks, steel shelving, general sheet-metal ware, shop fronts, glass, refractories, crucibles, bricks and steel scaffolding.

Originally formed in 1929 as H. L. Brisbane and Co. Ltd., the company started business by purchasing the small terracotta roofing tile factory at Belmont, then known as Westralian Potteries which had

itself bought out the bankrupt Kirton Potteries. A year later, H. L. Brisbane added the production of glazed stoneware sewerage pipes and fittings to its activities.

Business continued to progress, and additional lines were added in texture bricks and numerous other terracotta products.

A major development in 1938 was the amalgamation of interests between H. L. Brisbane and Wunderlich Ltd. This extended the company's activities to the manufacture of refractories, architectural sheet metal work, shop fronts, and shop fittings.

During the war years, Brisbane and Wunderlich manufactured assay crucibles and refractories for the mining industry, while for the military its metal and shop fitting sections made pontoon bridging equipment, ammunition boxes, and Bren-gun carrier parts.

In 1941, the State Government leased the Calyx pottery works at Subiaco to Brisbane and Wunderlich, as a result of which a large quantity of crockery was supplied to the armed forces. In 1945, the company purchased these works, and became the manufacturers of the famous Wembley Ware range.

After World War II, Brisbane and Wunderlich was faced with a huge demand for tiles. To meet increased production, the company expanded production. A new method of tile-drying was developed, revolutionising the manufacturing process for Marseilles pattern terracotta tiles.

In the pre-war years tile production by the company was 1,750,000 a year. By 1952, this had risen to 6,000,000.



Bristile kiln stacks, Grandstand Road, Ascot: 1999

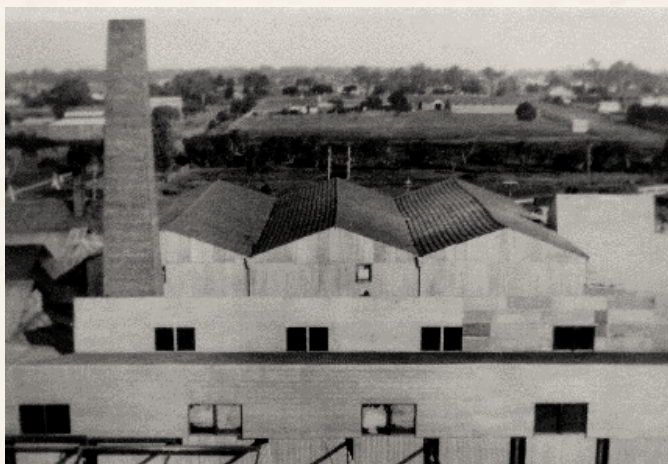
Advances in shop fitting necessitated an interest in glass, and in 1951 the situation was met by the acquisition of the business of the Perth Leadlight and Glazing Company, of Subiaco.

For years, the company supplied the majority of the State's need for sewerage pipes. In 1972, a second pipe factory was commissioned at Belmont, and a few years later Brisbane & Wunderlich merged with Whittakers to form Bristile Ltd. Shortly after this, the Belmont No. 2 plant was converted to tile production, as the market for clay pipes had vanished with the increasing use of plastic.

In 1982, the Bristile factory on Grandstand Road closed, and today the remaining kilns and chimneys have some protection by being heritage listed.



Brisbane & Wunderlich, preparing tiles for drying chamber: 1953



Bristile works



Brisbane & Wunderlich, stacking tiles in the kiln: 1953

Bristile Kiln Timeline

- 1904** Belmont's first pottery, 'Kirton's Patent Pottery Co.', opens on Grandstand Road.
- 1906** Kirton's goes bankrupt. Taken over by Piercy, Pitman & Piercy, trading as 'West Australian Pottery Co. Ltd.'
- 1929** Founding of H. L. Brisbane & Co., 5 June, which takes over WA Pottery.
- 1930** Activities extended to stoneware pipes.
- 1934/5** Additions to pipe and tile factories.
- 1938** Amalgamation with the Western Australian branch of Wunderlich Ltd. Name changed to H. L. Brisbane & Wunderlich Ltd.
- 1946** Tile factory gets modern equipment and additional kilns. Shortages of coal hold up production.
- 1955** Further building extensions.
- 1968** Expanded by adding pipe extruder, drying and handling equipment.
- 1972** No. 2 pipe factory commissioned at Belmont.
- 1977** Brisbane & Wunderlich merge with Whittakers to form Bristile Ltd.
- 1978** Conversion of Belmont No. 2 plant to roofing tile production. Clay pipe production ceases.
- 1982** Bristile factory on Grandstand Road closes. The chimneys and kilns will later be heritage listed.



Sugars brickworks – now the site of the Tonkin Highway Bridge



Aub Blomfield on Love Bros (dairyman) horse and cart (c.1920)

Mixed business

Alfred Hannaford (1890-1969) was a famous South Australian inventor of farming machinery. His first invention—The Hannaford Wet Wheat Pickler—was a great success.

His company first came to Western Australia in 1933. In 1947, a property was purchased in Belmont to unite the local office and workshop under one roof. As part of the silver jubilee celebrations of the company, Alf himself officially opened the buildings on 23 June 1950, which happened to be his 60th birthday.



Alf Hannaford & Co office and workshop, Belmont Avenue, Belmont (1950)

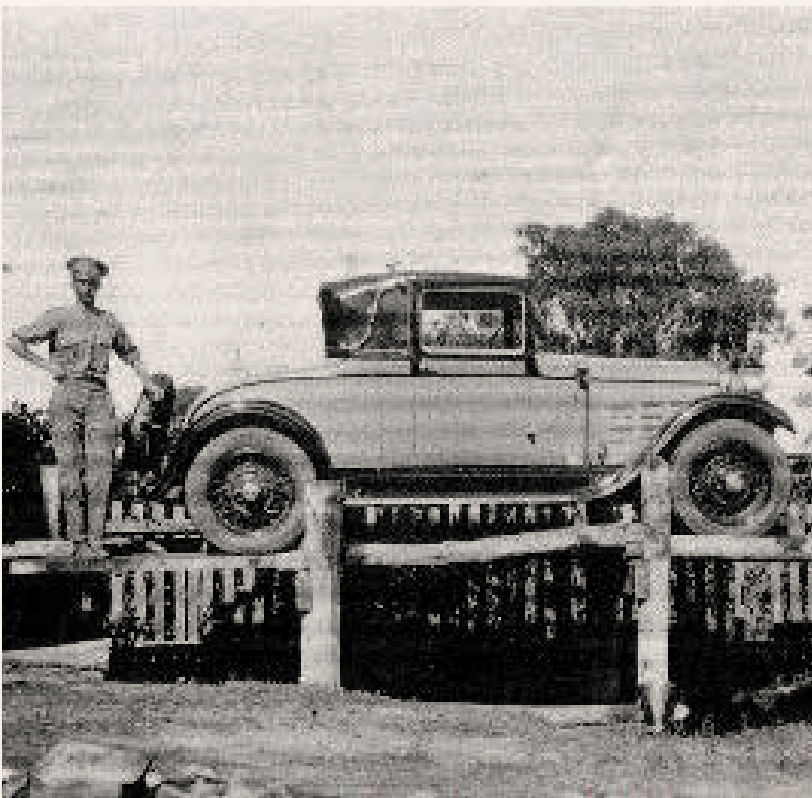


Aerial view of Plaimar Ltd, Belmont (1935)

Plaimar's factory at Belmont manufactured tannin extracts from wandoo bark for use by the Australian and overseas leather industry.



Monier roofing factory on Epsom Avenue, Redcliffe, with its distinctive cat logo (c.1996). The site is now Ascot Gardens Estate



Alf Hannaford & Co office and workshop, Belmont Avenue, Belmont (1950)



Horse drawn ice cart



Ted Davies Garage on Great Eastern Highway opposite Belgravia Street (1931)

Shopping in Belmont

Frank Wilson came to Belmont in 1917 at the age of eight, and lived in a wooden house on the corner of Matheson Road and Epsom Avenue. Years later, he recalled the districts businesses during his childhood:

There were no butchers in Belmont. Gibson's from Guildford and Trowbridge from Victoria Park served the district with a 'cutting cart'. Our family was sometimes unfortunate because we lived nearly in the centre and if a butcher sold out before they got to our house, they would just go home.

The only shop in Belmont in 1918 was Walkerden's. It was built in 1898 and was made of corrugated iron and stood on the corner of Great Eastern Highway and Grandstand Road.

The bakery on the corner of Hargreaves Street and Great Eastern Highway was built in 1905. Jack O'Mara was the first occupant but he was not a baker, so he employed one. Portwine and Lovelock were the bakers in the early 1920s.

There were three Hotels in the area—the Ascot, the Racecourse and the Sandringham. In the early days, they all had a large water trough similar to the ones seen in the old western movies, where horses could be tethered whilst both horse and owner would quench

his thirst. The Racecourse Hotel, together with several others in the metropolitan area, was de-licenced in the early 1920s.

The Post Office was in the front section of the Belmont Hall. The other side of the frontage was the Belmont Road Board office. Miss A. E. Duncan was the Post Mistress.

Bob Field's buses—which were noisy, slow and had solid rubber tyres—travelled from Redcliffe to Perth via Mathieson Road and Epsom Avenue. We mostly travelled by train as it was only a short walk to get to the train and the fare was much cheaper.

Local shopkeepers often tried to help their customers. Harold and Murray extended credit to trainers needing feed for stock, allowing them to run up big bills and pay them off when they had a winner. So did Corletts and some of the other local businesses.

In some cases it was only this extended credit that kept families going. Some of these debts had to be written off, and Andy Norlin often ended up with a bundle of worthless cheques.

Norlin's shop had its modest origins with his mother providing cool drinks for people attending functions at the South Belmont Memorial Hall, which was opposite their home. Then she decided to deal in a few groceries, as there were no shops in South Belmont (Kewdale) and some found it difficult to travel up to the main road for supplies.

Her idea proved so popular that Andy, who had lost his job with a motor firm in Adelaide Terrace due to the Depression, decided to open a full-time

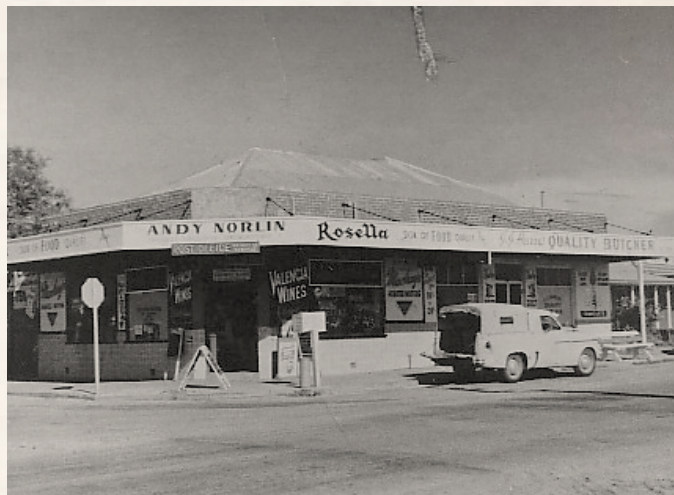


Mulligan's Produce Store (early 1900s) near corner of Orrong Road and Great Eastern Highway

business in South Belmont. Using his payout from his employer for funds, he erected a two-roomed weatherboard and asbestos building on the corner of the family's block and opened his business.

The new shop, the first in South Belmont, proved to be very popular, and Norlin was able to rebuild in brick some years later.

Andy had one of the first telephones in South Belmont, another attraction for his customers. As other phones were installed in the district, he began taking orders over the phone. These were delivered to his customers on a weekly basis. The delivery truck was also frequently called upon to take local people to hospital, often in the middle of the night.



Andy Norlin's shop, corner of Wright Street and Belmont Avenue



Car park at Belmont Forum



Mrs Milne's shop Newsagents and Stationer, Rivervale (1915)



Shop cnr Wright Street and Belmont Avenue



Bill Castle's shop cnr Gt. Eastern Highway and Norwood Road



Barrington's Store, 55 Great Eastern Highway, near Belmont Avenue (1930s)



Former Mulligans Store, corner of Great Eastern Highway and Orrong Road



General Store on Great Eastern Highway

Fishy Business

In 1940, since I was unable to join the services, I had to go and find work. This I found in a small business working for a Mr Gardener in Goodwood Parade, Rivervale.

My original job involved cleaning fish, these being Perth herring. The local fishermen received one penny per pound for them and the cleaning was usually done by women who were also paid one penny per pound.

After cleaning, the fish were placed into boxes and taken to Barretts Cold Store in Albany Highway, where they remained until the next day when once again they were taken to the cannery in Sydenham Street, South Belmont (Kewdale), which was located opposite Peet Park.

Here they were brined, weighed and crimped by hand machine, then placed on a conveyor belt and steam heated. Then a manually-operated machine was used to completely seal them into cans.

Later we began successfully experimenting with salmon. Supplies were plentiful from areas such as Hopetown, Albany and Busselton, but the major problem was how to get them to Perth in good, fresh condition.

The company decided to extend the Sydenham Street premises by establishing a cold storage room large enough to hold fifteen tons of fish. The year was around 1944-45.

The problem of transporting the fish to Perth was overcome by the extensive use of trucks. The salmon were packed in ice with large tarpaulins for covers.

Regardless of what time the trucks arrived, 1am or 3am, everyone was at work unloading the fish immediately and stacking them on the racks in the cold store.

We canned about 5000 cans daily when the salmon were running, and meanwhile we continued with the processing of herring which were now all being used by the Armed Forces. Often we worked all day and all night since we were required to process the fish as they became available.

Douglas Smith, 1983



A worker labelling tins of salmon at Ocean Canning in South Belmont.

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Western Mail, 27 July 1950

References

p. 3: Market gardening: Maxine Laurie, *Ever Flowing Forward: The Story of Belmont* (City of Belmont, 1999)

p. 4: Nellie Ogg: 'A Piggery', *Memories of Belmont* (Belmont Historical Society, 1986)

p. 5: Mayfield Farm: M. Duncan, 'A Poultry Farm: Mayfield', *Memories of Belmont*

p. 6: Courtland's Pottery: David Whiteford, 'Tramways of the Belmont District', *Light Railways*, No. 59, January 1978; Laurie, *Ever Flowing Forward*; G. Courtland, 'Courtland's Pottery', *Looking Back* (Belmont Historical Society, 1983)

p. 7: Sam Pedersen: M. Moore, 'Pederson', *Looking Back*

pp. 8-9: Bristle Kilns: West Australian, 4 November 1952; Sunday Times, 11 July 1954; Laurie, *Ever Flowing Forward*

p. 9: Timeline: 'Belmont: Places and Faces, 1899-1999' (City of Belmont, 1999); Laurie, *Ever Flowing Forward*; www.kwjacobs.com.au

pp. 10-11: Alf Hannaford: ADB & Hannaford's website, www.hannafords.com; Plaimar Ltd: information with image from State Library of Western Australia website, www.slwa.wa.gov.au

pp. 12-13: Shopping: Laurie, *Ever Flowing Forward*

p. 14: Canning factory: Douglas Smith (interviewed by A. Marshall, 1983), 'A Canning Business', *Memories of Belmont*, Vol. 2, (Belmont Historical Society, 1987)

Images (in order as shown in book)

p. 2: Aerial photograph: City of Belmont M0351-04

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p. 5: Mayfield Farm: City of Belmont M0138-15

pp. 6-7: Courtland Pottery original buildings: City of Belmont M0127-11; Courtland's Machinery: City of Belmont M0127-13; Charles Richard Courtland: City of Belmont M0127-02

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pp. 10-11: Sugar's Brickworks: City of Belmont M0073-02; Love Bros: City of Belmont M0242-01; Ted Davies Garage: City of Belmont M0408-01 & M0408-02; Alf Hannaford: State Library of Western Australia 234154PD; Monier Roofing: City of Belmont M0387-10; Plaimar Ltd: State Library of Western Australia 041390PD; Ice cart: City of Belmont M0319-01

pp. 12-13: Mulligan's Store: City of Belmont M0152-01; Andy Norlin's shop: City of Belmont M150-01; Belmont Forum: City of Belmont M0337-15; Mrs Milne's shop: City of Belmont M0095-01; Shop corner of Wright Street: City of Belmont M0151-01; Bill Castle's shop: City of Belmont M0096-02; Barrington's Store: City of Belmont M0115-01; Former Mulligan's Store: City of Belmont M0210-03; General store: City of Belmont M0096-01

p. 14: *Unnamed women lacquering a tin of salmon: Daily News, 17 March 1945; Advert for Ocean Canning: Western Mail 27 July 1950*

Front Cover Images (top and bottom)

Stacking tiles: State Library of Western Australia 010767D;

Mulligan's Store: City of Belmont M0152-01

Back Cover Image

Barrington's Store: City of Belmont M0115-01



Each part of the coat of arms symbolises an aspect of the City of Belmont. The kiln and stack represent brick making and the cog is a symbol for industry. The wings symbolise flight and the airport, while the horse is the racing industry. The green stands for public space; silver, the sky; and blue is the Swan River. The black swan is the State emblem, and the ducal coronet around its neck symbolises Belmont's relationship to WA.

For further information on the City of Belmont Heritage Series, please contact the Belmont Museum on 9477 7450 or email museum@belmont.wa.gov.au or visit 61 Elizabeth Street, Belmont WA 6104

