

# THE EVE STREET WETLANDS ARNCLIFFE

The Eve Street Wetlands at Arncliffe are a very recent formation.

How do I know this ?

Because I was there before it was formed, and walked across it as a 'Dry Paddock' for 7 years in my younger days.

My Name is Alan Russell. I am 86 years young. And I lived at 5 Eve Street, Arncliffe for the first 22 years of my life. And I regularly walked over the dry paddock that is now called "The Eve Street Wetlands".

It had a gravel road traversing it from Eve Street to the gate of Barton Park.

And I walked our 5 cows over that paddock every morning and every afternoon for 7 years from age 4 to age 10.

## COWS IN ARNCLIFFE ??

Yes. Dad eventually had 5 cows, that he milked every morning before he rode his bicycle to work, and I took them down Eve Street, over the paddock (now Wetlands) and locked them in Barton Park.

Dad's cows came about this way :-

We used to get our milk delivered by the Milkman, who would pour it from his container into our can, which was located on our front steps.

One day, Dad was looking out his bedroom window and he saw the Milkman pour water from our tap into our can. Watering the milk down !!!

That was enough for Dad. So he bought a cow from Booth's Dairy in Bestic Street, Rockdale, and called it "Daisy". So for a while, Daisy supplied us with fresh milk.

Then the neighbors and friends asked if they too could buy fresh milk from Dad.

But one cow was not enough for all of them.

So, one day Dad asked me to take Daisy to Booth's Dairy, and leave her there for a week.

Being only about 5 years old, I had no idea why. But I did know that Mr. Booth had a Bull !!!!

And the next week I collected Daisy from Booth's Dairy. And soon, Daisy had a calf. Dad called her "Rosie".

And the next year we had 2 more cows. "Josie" and "Lucy". Then another one called "Mary". 5 in all.

And Dad milked them all before he went to work. Then he rode his bike over the sewer pipe to General Holmes Drive, and then on to O'Riorden Street, Alexandria, to 'Buzzacot Wolseley', (who made sheep dips), where he was a 'Storeman'. Jack also worked there bending pipes.

And I took all the cows down to "The Farm" every morning, and brought them back every afternoon, over the dry paddock, now called 'The Wetlands'.

## THE FARM

I always thought that 'The Farm' was like you see in the Country. Cows; horses ; sheep; etc. in paddocks.

But No. I eventually found out that 'The Farm' stood for "The Sewerage Farm".

It originally was used to dry out the sewerage from Arncliffe and further afield, in long bays, where the sun would dry it out, and then it was used for fertilizer.

But because of this, the grass was rich and grew abundantly. And that was why the cows loved it.

It is now called "Barton Park" and in it's day it had 22 cricket pitches; a Baseball field'; and a Rugby League field.

I know this because I used to fetch the cricked balls that landed in the creek, and got paid thripence each for them.

I also went to watch my Brother, Frank, play Footy for the Arncliffe CYO side.

And during the week, golf balls were hit from the hill onto the Park, and I would get thripence each for the ones I recovered from the creek. A profitable occupation for a youngster.

## WHO MILKED THE COWS ?

Apart from Dad, only Frank milked the cows for one year.

He did this in his 'Gap year' after he left school, but then he went to George Foster and Sons (pronounced 'Egroeg RetsoF and Snos' as a lark by Frank) as a Fitter and Turner with Bob Russell (no relation). They eventually formed a Partnership cutting eucalyptus leaves for oil, for Cec's "Bon Manufacturing Coy". Frank took the cows down to the Farm ONCE. He tried to take a shortcut and tried to jump across the creek. BUT – he fell in it – AND – broke his arm !!!

Cec did not milk the cows. He brought in money selling newspapers on Arncliffe Railway Station.

Neither did Jack. He brought in money playing Tennis Tournaments.

Neither did Ken. He brought in money working as a Tradesman at 'Malleable Casting's at Sydenham.

Neither did I milk the cows. I was too young and did not have the strength in my hands to squeeze the teats.

But I did watch Dad milking them.

THE ATTACHED PHOTO, SHOWS A SIMILAR MILKING SET UP IN THE Paddock OPPOSITE 5 EVE STREET.

## BACK TO THE WETLANDS

The Wetlands were formed by three (3) creeks coming together at the end of Eve Street, before it turned right.

One came East down Eve Street from West Botany Street;

One came South from the Southern end of the Chinese Gardens (Sam Hop's);

And one came North along the Southern boundary of Eve Street.

They all met at the bottom of Eve Street, and flowed towards Muddy Creek, which flowed into Cooks River and out into Botany Bay.

That was before the M5 Motorway was built.

But more about that later.

## LIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVES.

Because the three creeks were regularly cleaned out by Mr. Levis of 7 Eve Street (a Council Employee), they would mostly be filled with water.

So, being adventurous, I decide to make a Canoe out of corrugated tin, and with a paddle, I ventured into the main creek. This would take me to Muddy Creek; Cooks River; and finally to Botany Bay.

Another Captain Cook in the making.

There was a wooden bridge across that creek, and I thought I would paddle under it.

I wonder if that bridge is still in the Wetlands ??

BUT – I only just got the Canoe in the water with me in it – AND – it started to SINK !!!

SO – Back home with it. And no more "Life on the Ocean Waves"

## COWBOYS AND INDIANS

In the paddock that is now known as the 'Eve Street Wetlands,' Rockdale Council had two (2) mounds of clay. Each was about 20 feet (7 meters) high and about 20 feet between them.

I still don't know what they were for, but they were a perfect battle ground for a clay throwing battle between two 'Warring Tribes'. No Guns or Bows and Arrows there. Just clay balls, thrown at each 'Tribe'.

But we did have some use for the clay.

We needed a cricket pitch where we could play, even in the rain.

So, in a wheelbarrow we carted some clay to under the wide sewer pipe, next to Barton Park.

We rolled the clay into a cricket pitch with Dad's tennis roller from the tennis court behind 7 Eve Street.

No stopping budding 'Don Bradmans'.

## THE CHINESE GARDENS AND MARSH STREET AND THE ORCHARD

The Chinese Gardens in Eve Street were originally marshes.

That is why their Western boundary road is called 'Marsh Street'.

Their Northern boundary was the sewer outlet, and their Eastern boundary was the "Orchard".

Ken remembered that Quinces were grown in the Orchard, and the tall pine trees surrounding it were protection from the winds. The orchard trees were gone, but the pine trees surrounding it lived on.

We could not graze the cows on the Orchard ground, because it was fenced in, and no one had the key to the gate. We only used the Orchard for kicking a football playing "forcing's back", after jumping the fence !!

#### THE FIRST (and last) CIGARETTE SMOKE

Playing under the wide sewer pipe was a good hiding place.

Once we 'borrowed' a leaf of Rhubarb from the Chinese garden and let it dry out.

Then we rolled it into a piece of newspaper, and twitched the ends.

We lit the paper and each of us had a 'drag'.

WOW – Coughing and spluttering, we threw the 'cigarette' down onto the ground, where it caught fire to the dry grass. With nothing to put it out but our shoes, we 'skedaddled' home.

Next thing we heard a Fire Engine going down Eve Street with its clanging sounds. Going to the fire that we lit. It appears that Mrs. French, who lived opposite the sewer pipe, had called the Fire Brigade when she saw the smoke from our fire.

Good old Mrs. French never 'dobbed' us in, even if she knew who lit it. Neighbors were like that.

#### THE MILK BOY

With so many cows being milked, and so much milk coming in, where did all the milk go ?

Some of it was turned into butter by Mum. And some of that butter was 'bartered' to the Schuman Family for coupons

I would turn the handle of the 'separator' in the shed, which was a silver bowl that held the milk, with a ratchet that turned paddles in the bowl. That would separate the cream out of the milk.

Mum would then make the cream into butter, and the remaining milk would be 'skim milk' that is: milk with the cream 'skimmed' off it. Today it is called 'Lite Milk'.

The rest of the milk, which was surplus to the family, was soon in demand by neighbors. For a fee.

And I delivered this milk on my  $\frac{3}{4}$  bike, which was made by Dad from old bike parts.

It had horizontal handle bars that could hold two (2) milk cans, one on each handle.

On this bike I delivered milk to:- Mrs. Corner; Mrs. Hoare; and Mrs. Wong, all in Brennan's Road.

Dad made a gate in the Corner's back fence, so that I could make a short cut to Brennan's Road.

Another delivery was to Mrs. Bale, I think a relation of Mum's, in Valda Avenue.

Then there was the delivery of 'skim' milk (gratis) to :- The Nuns at Arncliffe Convent; and to the Monsignor, at the Presbytery. I was never allowed into the Nun's kitchen – milk delivered to their verandah.

But, at the Presbytery, I was always given a biscuit by the housekeeper, Mrs. Tracy, in the kitchen.

#### THE CREATION OF THE EVE STREET WETLANDS

When the M5 was built, it blocked the creek, which ran alongside the sewer, into Muddy Creek.

Therefore, the water in the creeks had no where to go. So it accumulated in the dry paddock, turning it into a 'Wetland'.

So the 'Wetlands' was formed by :-

The drainage coming East down Eve Street; the drainage coming from the Chinese Gardens; and the drainage coming North along Eve Street.

## CONCLUSION

The Eve Street Wetlands were originally a dry paddock, partly owned by Bengamin Eve and William Beehag. The Wetlands now has a bicycle track around it's boundary, going along Eve Street; then next to the sewer pipe; then under the sewer pipe; (where I used to take the cows) and on to the Kogarah Golf Links.

Those bike riders would have no idea that they were following in the 'foot-steps of the Russell's 5 cows'.

Rusty Tales

By:

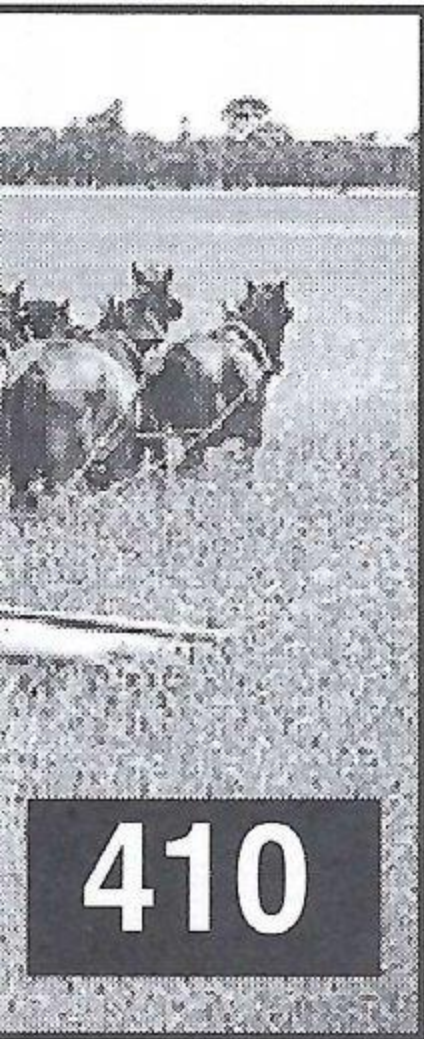
Alan Russell

2022

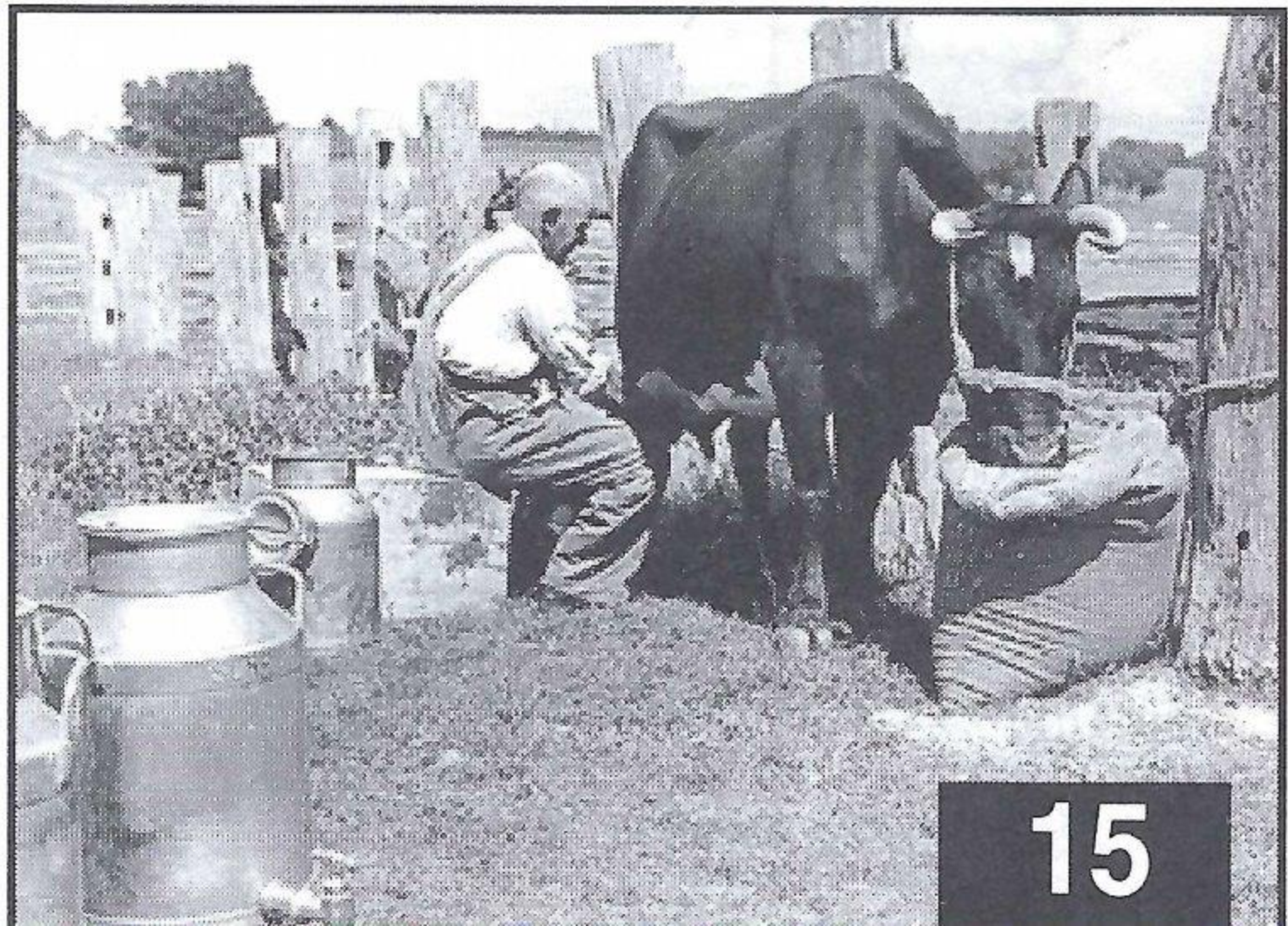


DAD

MILKING "DAISY"



410



15