

## **“ARNCLIFFE DURING WORLD WAR TWO”**

### **PLANE CRASH**

The most dramatic event that I remember during that time, was the American Liberator Plane that crashed into the sewer pipe over Muddy Creek at Arncliffe.

It was in the night time, about 8 pm. on 19<sup>th</sup> July, 1945 and as we lived in Eve Street, being the closest Street to the crash, we heard a loud BANG. And I was thrown out of my stretcher bed when our house shook with the blast.

Dad had not gone to bed, and he saw the flames, and he got on his push bike and rode over the sewer pipe to see what he could do for the survivors. But, sadly, there were no survivors out of the 12 Airmen who died in the crash.

I always remember reading that the plane hit a pine tree on take-off. I remember those trees. And that is the “Official” record of the Crash.

But – the site of the wreckage was on the other side of the sewer pipe to the Airport, and it looked like it crashed while landing.

MAYBE the plane ‘swung around’ after the right wing hit the tree, and then plummeted into the sewer pipe.

It is still a Mystery to me.

Next day, I walked over the sewer pipe to see the wreckage.

I managed to get hold of a piece of the plane, and brought it home.

When Dad saw this he said to me “Son, you have to take that piece of plane back to where you got it from”

“The Investigators will have to examine the parts, to see why the Plane crashed”.

What bad luck for me !!

I was hoping to take the plane part to School, and ‘boast’ about how I heard the Crash; fell out of bed; and got a piece of the wreckage.

At that age, (about 9 years old) I don’t think that I thought about the poor Airmen.

At the time, I don’t think that it was established whether the plane was taking off, or landing, when it hit the sewer pipe.

From the position of the wreckage, Dad thought it was too low when it tried to land on the West - East Runway, and hit the sewer pipe.

Planes come in very low onto that runway. I remember taking a broom stick on to the sewer pipe and trying to reach a plane coming in to land !!. It was always too high for that. (I could have caused another Crash ???)

### **MINI JAPANESE SUBMARINE**

The next most dramatic event that I remember, was seeing the Japanese Mini Submarine being hoisted out of the water at the place where the Opera House is now. It was where the tram shed was located in those days.

Dad and Mum took me to the jetty to see the wreckage being lifted out of the water.

ATTACHED is a photo of the event. In my imagination, I think I can see Mum in the picture, (and Me??) among the Sailors watching the event in the picture. Photo by Sue Rosen from her book "Scorched Earth".

That Mini Submarine entered the Harbour by travelling under a Ship, while the Anti-Submarine net was open.

It came from a 'Mother Submarine' which was stationed outside the Heads, waiting for the return of the Midget Submarine.

The Midget Submarine Fired a torpedo at the American Battle Ship "USS Chicago", which was in Sydney Harbour at the time.

It missed the Battle Ship, but struck a Ferry, "The Kuttabal", which was being used during the war for Sailors.

Twenty one (21) Sailors sadly were killed. But the rest escaped injury. Including Bob, a mate of Frank, my Brother.

(They both later went on to form a joint Partnership cutting Eucalyptus leaves for Oil for Brother Cec.).

The Mother Submarine outside the Harbour was never found.

But the Mini Sub was destroyed by depth – charges in the harbour, dropped by Australian Naval Ships.

#### BARBED WIRE

At Kyeemagh Beach, where we used to go swimming by walking across the sewer pipe from Eve Street, they put barbed wire along the length of the Beach, stretching to the Baths at Brighton-Le-Sands.

It was to stop Landing Parties from Japanese boats landing on the Beach at Kyeemagh.

This stopped us from going swimming at Kyeemagh during that time. So we had to go the Baths at Brighton for our swim.

It was during that time that Dad taught me to swim, by encouraging me to swim from the First Steps of the Baths to the shore.

I finally made it !!!

#### CANNONS AT BRIGHTON

To fire on Japanese Ships entering Botany Bay through the Heads, two (2) Canons were placed high up on the foreshore at Brighton Baths, facing out to sea. These were mounted on wooden stands. They would have been loaded with powder and round shot; rolled down the barrel; and fired with a lighted wick.

One Canon is still at Brighton, next to the Baths.

While the other one is outside the Administration Building of Rockdale Council Chambers.

#### AIR RAID WARDEN

During the War, Dad was made an "Air Raid Warden", with a sign on our front gate stating "WARDEN".

He was issued with a Gas Mask, and attended lessons at the 'Loft' opposite our house in Eve Street.

The 'Loft' was owned by Mr. Allen, who owned horses. And the loft held their hay.

The horses were used to take produce from the Chinese Gardens into the Haymarket.

But more about the Chinese Gardens later.

Dad made me a Mini Gas Mask, with a pouch to carry it in. And I sometimes went with him when he patrolled the streets to ensure the lights were 'Blacked-out' in the night.

His patrol was West Botany Street – from Marsh Street to Brennon's Road – Brennon's Road - to Niblic Street – and Eve Street.

One night when I went with Dad, we saw a light in a window in West Botany Street.

Dad knocked on the door and a Lady came out.

Dad said "Madam, if the Japanese see the light on in your window, they might drop a bomb on your house".

"So please cover it with black paper". Well – The Lady skedaddled in and turned off the light in a flash.

#### BROTHERS NOT ENLISTED

Even though Dad was a Warden, only one of my Brothers was called up for Service during the War. Cec enrolled in the Navy, and went for his Medical. They gave him a leather case at the Medical Office.

BUT – When the results of his Medical were examined, he had "Flat Feet", and that prevented him from enlisting.

BUT – He was entitled to keep the leather case, which he gave to me !!! A souvenir for me from the War.

My other Brothers were not called up.

Jack, the eldest, was engaged in a "Protected Industry" making sheep yards & dips and motor boat parts at 'Buzzacott Wolseley'.

Ken, my Half-Brother, was also in a "Protected Industry", making castings for motor bikes at 'Malleable Castings' at Sydenham.

ATTACHED is a photo of Jack and Ken, and their future Wives, Olive and Millie, in the Tennis Team, who continued to play Tennis on the Court "Bonnie Doon" at the back of our Home in Eve Street during the War.

Frank, the next eldest, was too young to be called up, being only 14 years of age. But it didn't stop him from riding our Cows. ATTACHED IS A PHOTO of Frank – Riding "POSSUM" in the paddock across the road from 5 Eve Street.

And I was only 6 years old. But I did watch Dad milking the cows. ATTACHED is a Photo of "Lookalike Dad milking Daisy".

Photo courtesy of Melvin Pidgeon of Oberon.

#### AIR RAID SHELTER IN OUR BACK YARD

Because Dad was a Warden during the War, he took the advice to make an Air Raid Shelter in our back yard.

As the ground was mainly sandy, it was not too difficult to dig.

It finished up being about 12 feet long; 4 feet wide; and 6 feet high. With wooden steps going down into it.

The sides were held back with timber sheets. Corrugated Iron was placed on the roof and sand bags over that.

It was located next to the clothes line post, running East to West. Where the vegetable garden was.

All the Family and some Neighbours were involved in digging it.

I remember that I cut the foot of Jack Donnelly with my shovel when we were digging it. One volunteer down ???

ATTACHED is a Drawing of "5 EVE STREET AIR RAID SHELTER" in our back yard. Showing where, and how it was built.

#### PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTIRE

At Arncliffe St. Josephs Primary School, we were well prepared for an Air Raid Attack, in case it came. We carried a small bag at all times, with contents consisting of: a rubber mouth ring; cotton wool; bandage; plaster; ear plugs and condys crystals. (I forget what that was for. Maybe if we cut ourselves). We also had a material 'sling' for your arm, in case you broke your arm. That list of items was provide by Monica Schuman, who was the eldest of the Family.

We had extensive practices in the event of a raid.

A bell would ring at odd times during the week and we would proceed in an orderly fashion to the ground floor hall – where we would sit under the stage, or on the stage, depending on the number of students arriving.

We dutifully put the rubber ring between our teeth, (so they wouldn't break), waiting for the imagined blast of bombs or guns to come.

The really scary day came when we were at Benediction in the Church one school day, and Monsignor Rafferty announced from the Pulpit that Darwin had been Bombed !!! We were all shocked.

School day was abandoned. We collected our school bags from school, and ran home.

At most homes, the kitchen table was pushed against the wall under the window, and they sat under the table with the rubber ring in their mouths until it got dark. They were really scared and the rings prevented their teeth chattering.

The Russell's retreated to their "Air Raid Shelter" in their back yard. Until it got dark. Because there were no lights in the shelter.

The upshot of that trauma was that we didn't realise until a few years later, that Darwin was subject to a lot of bombing raids by the Japanese, but the Government led us to believe that everything was OK and that no severe damage was done.

But, of course, there was a lot of damage in Darwin. !!

#### RATIONING TEA AND BUTTER

During the War, Tea and Butter were rationed. Families were issued with 'Coupons' depending on the number in the Family.

And if you dropped a Coupon on the floor ? DRAMA. Everyone hurriedly looking for it.

As Dad milked 5 cows in Arncliffe, we had plenty of milk, and I separated the cream from the milk with a 'Separator', by turning the handle of the machine. Mum then turned the cream into butter, and we could give the excess butter to Families who needed it.

In exchange, Mum got Tea Coupons from those Families, because our Family Members were great 'Tea Drinkers'.

I remember one Family who we did the exchange with, was the Schuman Family.

I later found out via 'Sugar' and 'Dibsie' Schuman, that they NEVER ate the 'Russell's Butter'. "Too Rich" they said.

#### BACK YARD VEGETABLE GARDEN AND CHOOK YARD

As vegetables were scarce during the War, Dad made our back yard into a large vegetable garden. He planted TOMATOES; LETTUCE; SPRING ONIONS; and SPINACH. With GRAPES along the chook fence.

The Grapes were covered over with netting, to stop the birds (silver eyes) from pecking them. We also had a Lemon Tree planted in the Chook Yard, to give shade for the 20 chooks that you were allowed to keep by the Egg Board. Mum covered the eggs with a film of "Keepegg", to give the eggs a longer life.

Dad didn't grow Cabbages or Cauliflowers or Rhubarb, because he could buy them at the Chinese Gardens called "Sam Hop" across the road from us.

ATTACHED is a photo of Dad's back garden, showing me, age 13 and Nephew Robert Russell age 2, standing where our Air Raid Shelter was previously built.

#### SAM HOP'S GARDEN

Following is a story about the Chinese who worked in Sam Hop's Garden, which was opposite our home in Eve Street, Arncliffe.

Where the M 5 Freeway now runs into Marsh Street, there was a Chinese Garden, called SAM HOP. It had been there since I could remember. So they must have been the initial inhabitants of the Property.

There was a house on it, and the gardens covered several Acres of land, down to the end of Eve Street.

They also had land on the Southern side of Eve Street. Going all the way to Mrs. French's place.

There were about 10 Chinese living in the 3 Bedroom house. And Mr. Schuman, who was a Plumber and Gasfitter who fixed their plumbing from time to time, said that they slept in bunks attached to the wall, which folded up against the wall in the day time.

They would pick their vegetables and wash them in a large concrete Bath under a shed. The Bath was about 20 feet long; by 10 feet wide; and 4 feet deep. The 10 Chinese would all be standing around this Bath, washing vegetables and tying them in bundles with strips of flax plants, which they grew in the creek at the bottom of their garden.

They stacked the bundles ready to send to Market at Haymarket the next day, by Horse and Cart.

The Horse and Cart would return with a load of manure from the Stables at Newtown.

The horse would be stabled in Mr. Allen's stable, with the hay in the loft overhead.

No one spoke while they washed the vegetables.

When I asked each of them "Are you Sam Hop?" they would just grin; showing yellow teeth; but no reply.

Even though Mick was the 'Boss of the Outfit', they all seemed to go their own way; washing and tying bundles.

One day I was leaning over the Bath so far that I nearly fell in. I think they all laughed at that !

#### SAM HOP'S MONEY TIN

When Mum would send me over to Sam Hop's to get some Rhubarb for Sunday's dessert, I would give the Chinaman sixpence. As they had no pockets in their pants - HE WOULD PUT IT IN HIS EAR !!!

I would follow him to where he picked the Rhubarb; all the time looking at his ear, to see if the sixpence would fall out.

But, No, it remained in his ear, even when he bent over to pick the rhubarb.

I heard the story from my Wife, that when the Schuman girls; Kate; Sugar; and Dibsie, went to buy vegetables from Sam Hop's Garden, they would give the Chinaman one shilling and sixpence. AND – sixpence went in ONE ear – and the shilling in the OTHER ear.

They also ran along next to him – thinking the money would fall out – But no. His ears were '**as Safe as a Bank**'.

#### SWIMMING WITH FROGS

Now one Sunday I was sent to get a bunch of Rhubarb for Sunday dessert. Because I had just been to Mass, I had on my good Sunday Suit.

When Mick was picking the Rhubarb, I looked for some frogs in the water hole that they got their water from.

It had a small plank going down into the water, which I tried to walk down. Now I wasn't as balanced as they were, (with their buckets of water on a long pole over their shoulders) - AND I FELL IN.

"Help, I cried. I can't swim". But Mick just looked at me and grinned.

Somehow I managed to get out of the waterhole, and 'skedaddled' home. Without the Rhubarb – AND – with my Best Sunday Suit all covered with slime. Did Mum give me the 'Rounds of the Kitchen'. No dessert that Sunday.

But Dad was more understanding. He said "Mick told me you tried to swim, but you weren't much of a swimmer. The frogs were better than you".

So the next week, Dad took me to Brighton Swimming Baths and gave me my first swimming lesson – from the First Steps to the sand. And I have never looked back. Becoming the Senior School Swimming Champion at Marist Brothers High School, Kogarah.

All because of that day when I "Swam with the frogs".

ATTACHED is a photo of Dad and Alan, aged three (3), coming home from Sam Hop's Garden to 5 Eve Street Arncliffe.

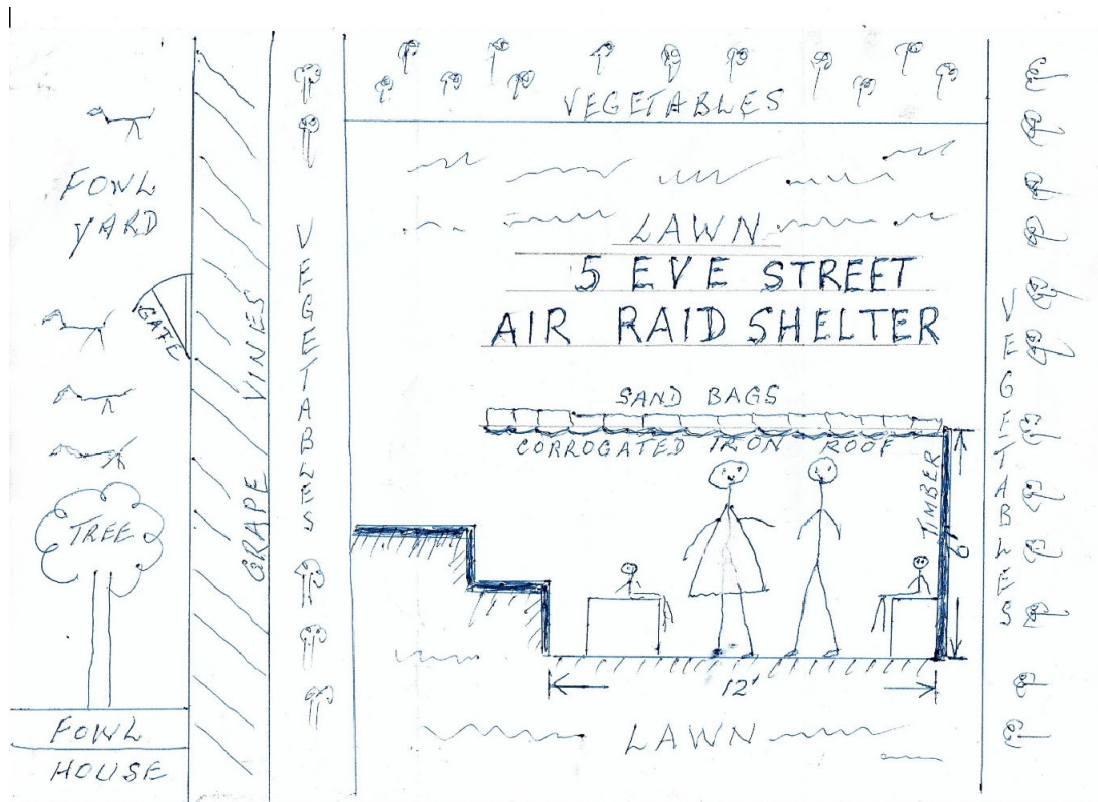
If there is a War again, as Alan completed his National Service Training in 1955, you will see in the ATTACHED photo -

#### **Alan will be:- ON GUARD !!!**

Rusty Tales.

By Alan

2023



Air Raid Shelter, 5 Eve Street



Alan 3 & Dad from Sam Hop Eve Street





Alan 13, Robert 2 at 5 Eve Street, 1949

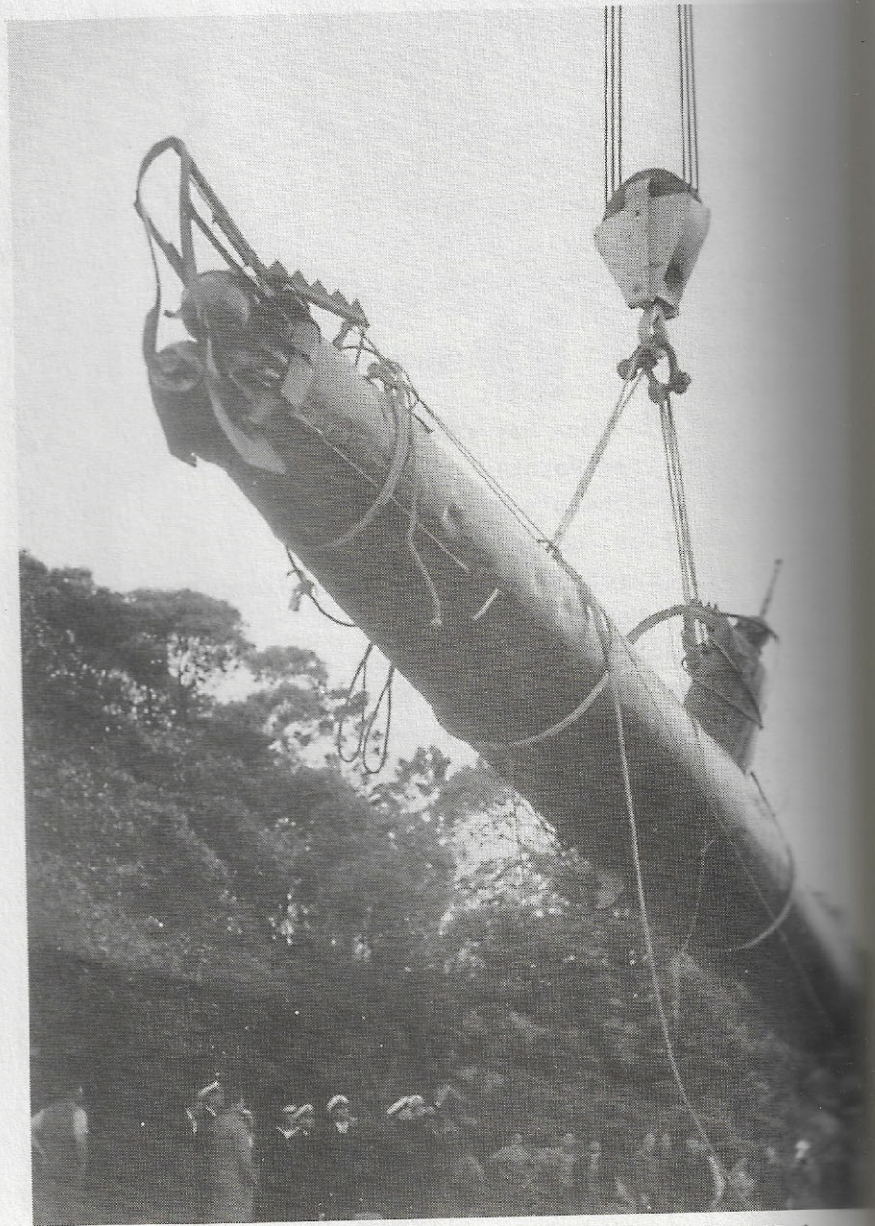


Alan 1955 National Service at Balcombe Victoria



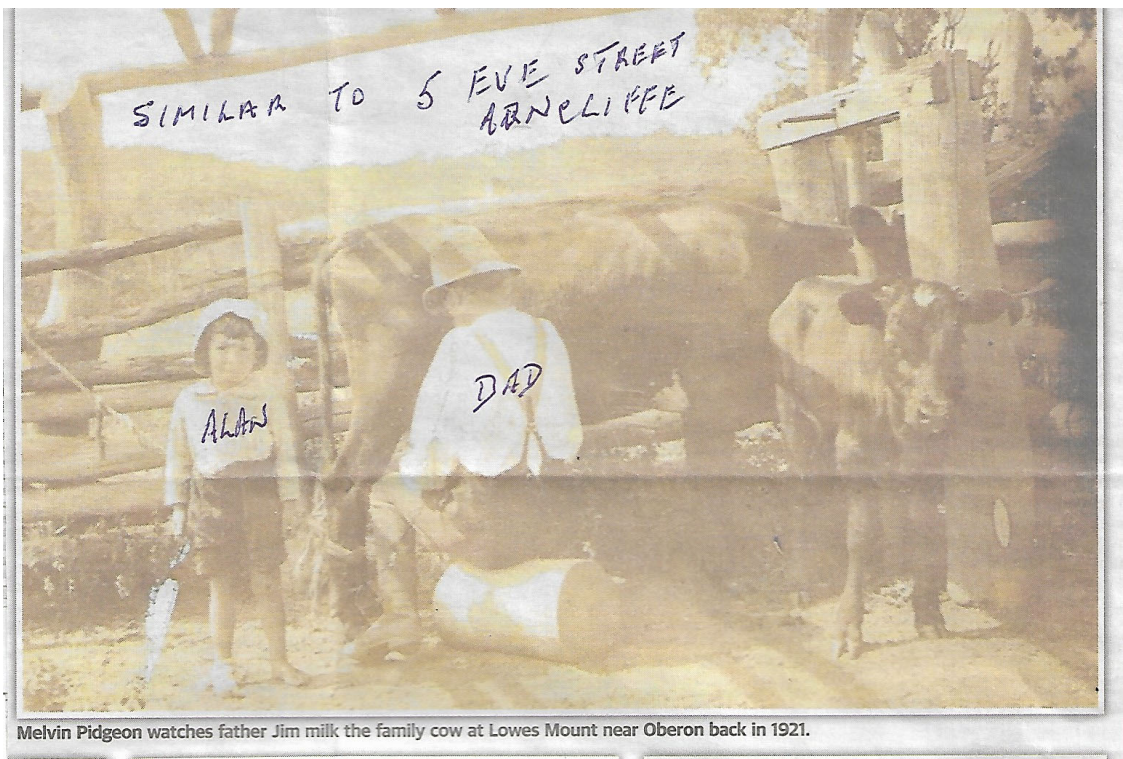
Frank on Possum at 5 Eve Street





A mini-sub shortly after its recovery from Taylors Bay, Sydney Harbour.

Japanese Mini Sub being hoisted onto land



Lookalike Milking Time 5 Eve Street, Arncliffe  
Alan with Bat



1935



The Russell Tennis Players  
Jack 22 & Ken 22 Olive & Millie both 18