

Roundabout

Monbulk Historical Society Newsletter

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The story of R.W. Graham and the history of Sherbrooke Post Office continues...



The second Sherbrooke Post Office was built c.1910

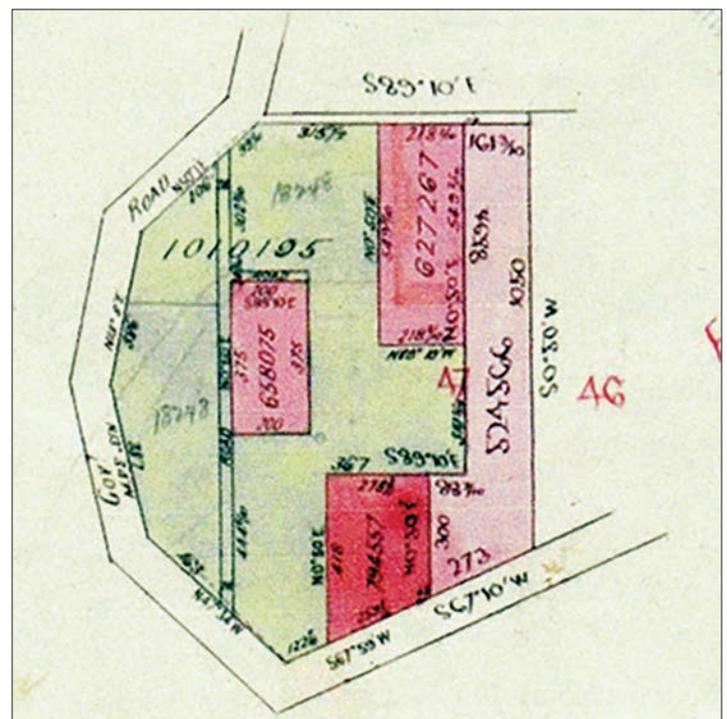
The second Sherbrooke Post Office image is a Graham family photograph, almost certainly of the house Percy Chandler built. It looks relatively new, although the garden looks relatively mature and the fence is not new. It is not exactly clear when this photo was taken. Standing on the verandah of the house is Robert Graham with his wife, Kate, the second Sherbrooke postmaster! I suspect that it was taken soon after they moved in.

Whilst it is difficult to discern, there is a sign post at the right edge of the photo, pointing to the back of the house, with the words "Post Office". This suggests that the Post Office operated in a separate annex or building, or in the rear of the new house. The shape of the roof certainly suggests that it is not the same building as that in an earlier photograph.

A comment made by Mrs Heath was that the second Post Office was moved to the convalescence home sometime after 1936, suggesting that if the new house was built in the lane opposite the old house, then the current house sitting in Merrimu Lane next to 'Merrimu' is not R.W. Graham's second Post Office. In fact, because of the height

of the building in the above photo, it is doubtful that the current house could have been modified to the existing lower roof line. So where was the second Post Office located, and what did Robert Graham call his residence? Looking at Graham's original land allotment and what he did with it, and the correspondence he wrote during that period, provides some answers.

On the 9th January 1906, R.W. Graham was granted ownership of allotment 47, Section G in the parish of Monbulk, county of Evelyn. Just after he purchased the lease in 1906, and at various times in the following years, he sold 5 separate subdivided blocks.



Map of RW Graham's block 47G16. The coloured area bound by what now is known as Back Road and Sherbrooke Lodge Road belonged to him.

On the 5th May 1906 he sold block 524566 to Hester Gertrude Dickson, and I assume that with these funds, on the 23rd May 1906 he then discharged his mortgage to the Commissioners of the Savings Bank of the Colony of Victoria for Lot 47 Section G. On the 27th July 1911 he sold block 627267 to Adelaide Ellen Smith and on the 21st Aug 1911 he sold block 658075 to Henrietta Frances Billing & Miriam Gertrude Billing.

Based on its location, bounded by what are now known as Merrimu Lane and Wakefield Lane, the last sale suggests that the block contained his original house, now called 'Merrimu'. Robert and Kate had obviously moved into their new house (and second Post Office) by then.

On the 8th Feb 1916, he sold block 7946557 to Violet Marian Fawcett. My belief is that after R.W. Graham and his family moved into the new residence, the owners of block 658075 named the original Graham residence 'Merrimu' sometime after their purchase.

On Saturday 24th June 1916, the following advertisement appeared in the Melbourne Argus:

**DANDENONG RANGES, BEAUTIFUL
SHERBROOKE,**

Queen of the Mountain

1800 ft above sea level, magnificent views, and within quarter of a mile of Sherbrooke Falls, State Forest, and tourist tracks.

BUILDING ALLOTMENTS

Half - acre BLOCKS, Larger areas if required, 2 1/2 Miles from Railway Station
Apply R.W. Graham Sherbrooke.

Did Robert Graham have the intention to further subdivide the remaining block 1010195?

Land Department records, from 1894 to 1914 show that R.W. Graham had never referred to any of his various houses or properties as 'Merrimu'. However, on many occasions he referred to his residence as 'Delaware'.

On the 19th Feb 1903, R.W. Graham wrote a letter to the Department, with his address given as 'Delaware', Sherbrooke. This was the first time 'Delaware' Sherbrooke, was mentioned in correspondence between himself and the Department.

In 1904 Robert Graham's brother Henry sent postcards to this address. On the 12th July 1909, the marriage certificate of Robert's son Fred Graham, gave his usual address as 'Delaware'. Sherbrooke, and it was still being mentioned in State Forest Department records on 23rd Dec. 1914.

The only early mention of a property called 'Merrimu' in the vicinity of the Dandenong Ranges is on a 1913 map of "Sherbrooke and Surrounding Districts" (held by Dawn & Graeme McPherson, Sherbrooke, and was later printed in Monbulk Historical Society's "When Roads Were Tracks" page 195.) The map contains a note stating "To be kept at 'Merrimu' for the use of visitors, drawn by A G Hooke".



The section of the map showing 'Merrimu' and the Post Office are identified.
Full map on page 4.

The map also contains a table of distances from 'Merrimu' to various attractions marked on the map. This explains the reason the map was to be kept at 'Merrimu', so visitors knew how far they needed to travel or walk from that location.

The interesting point about the table is that the Sherbrooke Post Office is shown to be 50 yards from 'Merrimu', indicating two different locations in 1913. The number 50 appears to be an alteration on the map, which may suggest that either after the map was drawn in 1913 the Post Office moved, or that a more accurate distance was measured.

The Post Office is shown north of 'Merrimu'. Another note on the map written in red and in brackets after the words "To be kept at Merrimu" are the words "House faces North".

R.W. Graham died in a Jinker accident returning from Ferntree Gully Courthouse on the 8th February 1918. Listed in the probate inventory of assets left to Kate Graham was the untransferred part of his Lot 47G 7 acres of land or thereabouts upon which was erected a four-bedroom cottage occupied by

R.W. Graham as a dwelling and barn stable and cart shed known as 'Rose Cottage'. There was no mention of a separate Post Office building, annex or outhouse. On the 10th Sept 1921, the remainder of the allotment, block 1010195, which included the above, was sold by Kate Graham to William Charles Frederick Thomas.

It is unclear just where the 'Merrimu' name came from, but it was obviously being used in 1913, whilst R.W. Graham was still using his residential name of 'Delaware'. The only other 'Merrimu' properties in the early-mid 1900s was one owned by a Joseph Voysey (an estate agent), Bourke Road Malvern and a reception centre in Chadstone which was built on an old homestead.

After Kate Graham finished as Sherbrooke Post Master at the end of 1918, Waghorn¹² lists the following ongoing postmasters: -

Mrs G J O'Neill 1918/1928
 Mrs R M Linskey (nee Hartney) 15 1928/1933
 Mrs F Gason 1933/1948
 Mr James Cochrane Mc Gregor 1948/1949
 Mrs Annie Maud Ewan 1949/1950
 Malcolm Menzies Jones 1950/1953
 William Frank Craig 1953/1968
 No name given 1968/1975

Further to this Helen Coulson's research notes provide the following: -

Ruby Hartney (not her married name) took over from O'Neill's, then Norman Gason (in the old home first), then Gason built a new one. The names are confirmed by Waghorn.

A previous owner of 'Merrimu', Grahame McPherson, provides the following information regarding the owners of 'Merrimu'¹⁷ after the death of R.W. Graham. *"Kate Graham carried on the mail service for some months after her husband's death. George O'Neill had already taken over the mail run and in March 1918 he married Garnet Beatty. Initially they lived in Mrs Graham's house 'Merrimu', but in 1920 they moved to another property called 'Carinda'. By the early 1930s, the former Graham property was occupied by Mr E. Whitehead."*

The last Sherbrooke Post Office operating over 20 years ago, was the general store/post office on Sherbrooke Road, Sherbrooke, where *Woods Accommodation* currently stands.

It should be noted that whilst R.W. Graham was the Sherbrooke Postmaster for 24 years, his main occupation was that of a farmer. His farm was placed under the Village Settlement Scheme on the 1st December 1894. His survival as a Village Settler is another story of struggle and perseverance! The Post Office just helped supplement his income.

As mentioned earlier he was also a government deputy registrar, a JP, secretary of the Sassafras Church of England, secretary of the Monbulk Fruit Growers Association (later becoming the Monbulk Jam and Preserving Co), a member of the School Board of Advice for the East Riding of the Shire of Ferntree Gully, and he engaged regularly with the local council and the Dandenong Water Trust! He was often called upon to be the MC at local community functions and was also a regular guide for people who visited Sherbrooke Forest and made the track to Sherbrooke Falls, which had previously been named "Graham Falls".

As dedicated Sherbrooke postmasters delivered the mail along unmade tracks¹¹ for many years, questions still remain regarding Post Office locations.

Some questions still remain of R.W. Graham and the history of Sherbrooke Post Office!

- Which of the Graham houses was called "Delaware" (spanning from 1903 to 1914) and where was it located?
- Were the two original dwellings R.W. Graham built, on the same subdivision allotments, or were they separated with the subdivision of Lot 47G?
- What was the addresses of the various post offices?
- Who provided the name 'Merrimu' to R.W. Graham original dwelling, and
- Where was 'Rose cottage' located?

By David Graham, great grandson of R.W. Graham

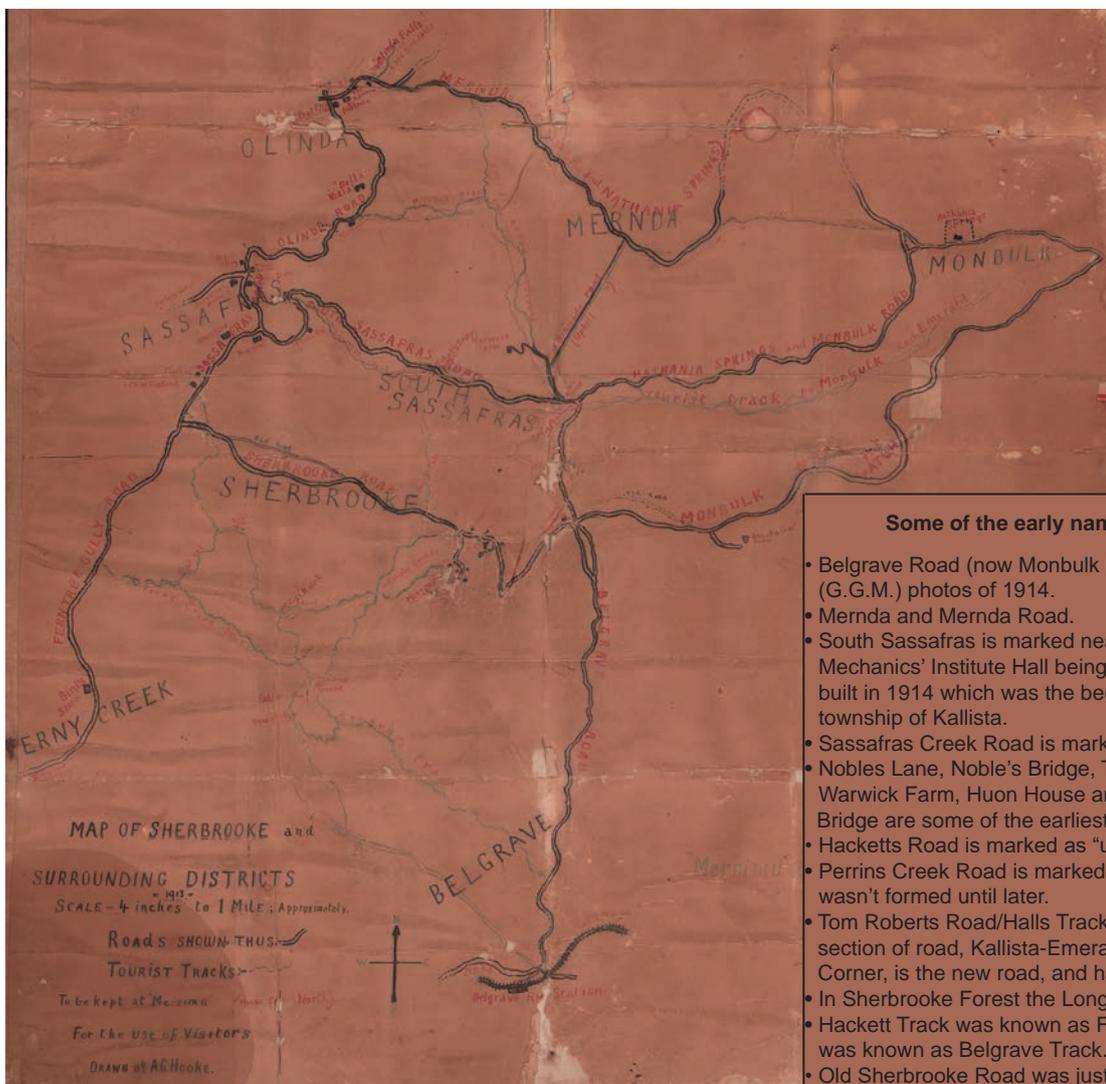
References for R.W. Graham and the history of Sherbrooke Post Office.

¹¹ The Argus (Melbourne, Vic Wed 25 Dec 1895)

¹² The Waghorn Index, Victorian Postmasters and Postmistresses, 1901 to 1975 (G 383.49945 P8458W)

¹⁶ LANDATA "Titles Office Record of Subdivision, Register Book Vol 3110, Folio 822".

¹⁷ National Trust of Victoria 9 Oct 2001 letter CS: RH:6780 and Classification report for Merrimu FN 6780 - Grahame McPherson.



Some of the early names marked on this map are:

- Belgrave Road (now Monbulk Road) as used in George G. Murray's (G.G.M.) photos of 1914.
- Mernda and Mernda Road.
- South Sassafras is marked near Beagley's Bridge prior to the Mechanics' Institute Hall being built in 1913 and Le Juge's bakery built in 1914 which was the beginning of the present site of the township of Kallista.
- Sassafras Creek Road is marked as South Sassafras Road.
- Nobles Lane, Noble's Bridge, Terry's Store, Gilmour's Nursery, Warwick Farm, Huon House and Beagley's Bridge are some of the earliest named locations around Kallista.
- Hacketts Road is marked as "unmade road, uphill"
- Perrins Creek Road is marked as Perrins Creek Track, the road wasn't formed until later.
- Tom Roberts Road/Halls Track is marked as Old Road.. The new section of road, Kallista-Emerald Road, from Church Street to Cook's Corner, is the new road, and had only recently been put in.
- In Sherbrooke Forest the Long Bridge was known as Friday's Nook.
- Hackett Track was known as Feryn Creek Track while Hillclimb Track was known as Belgrave Track.
- Old Sherbrooke Road was just referred to as "short cut".

Map of Sherbrooke & Districts 1913

"See ya later Jimmy"

James Desmond Fraser was the 4th of eight children to Nell and Bill Fraser. He was born on 21st Dec 1938 and grew up in Silvan Road Monbulk.

Jim attended Monbulk State School and then Upwey High School. His first job was with Moss's Nursery where he spent the next 27 years before working at JFT Nurseries until he retired.

Jim first met his wife Lorraine when he saw her walking in the main street of Monbulk while driving his A-Model Ford. He stopped to offer her a ride home and Lorraine accepted. Lorraine lived in Preston at the time but visited every weekend with her parents to their Monbulk holiday home and so a lasting relationship began.

Jim and Lorraine married and had a family of 4 - Jason, Travis and twins Christian and Amber, all of whom he was very proud of.

Jimmy's love for sports showed through as he rarely missing a Thursday night or Saturday at the Log Cabin during footy and cricket season.

He began playing football for Monbulk in his mid teens until he retired 85 games later in 1963. With his boys now involved in football, he threw his energies into the Junior Club coaching and serving on the committee, for a time as President.

Jimmy was heavily involved with the MFNC for 20 years

and was made a Life Member in 2004 and a Life Member of Monbulk Junior Football Club in 1998.

His time with the Monbulk Cricket Club was also a long one. He began playing in 1954 until the 5th XI premiership in 1988/89. His children grew up at the cricket club so it's not surprising that Jimmy got involved as a junior coach.

Over the last 30 years he continued to support the Seniors when they played at home and greeted everyone at the Log Cabin from his special seat with a "g'day". Jimmy was made a Life Member of the MCC in 1975.

Fishing was another love of Jimmy's. He and his family loved to camp on the Goulburn River where Jim could spend his days fishing. When not on holidays, Jim could often be found with his fishing rod alongside the Woori Yallock Creek.

Jim's quick wit and sense of humour were much loved by everyone and, of course, he loved a beer!

Jimmy will be missed not only by his much loved family but by everyone who knew him.

R.I.P. Jim Fraser

