

INTERVIEW WITH KATHLEEN BAILEY, 22 APRIL 2013

This is a transcript of the recording made on 22 April 2013 of an interview with Kathleen Bailey who lives at 168B Page Street, Middle Park. The interview is conducted by Anne Miller and is made on behalf of the Middle Park History Group. [There are several interruptions when Kath's dog Peter sought attention.] Some additional comments have been added when Anne met Kath to check the transcription of the recording.

Preferred Name. Kathleen preferred to be addressed as Kath, she was only called Kathleen by her Mother when she did something wrong. Kath was born in East Melbourne on 25 August 1923, she was an only child.

Family and Growing up. Kath's parents were Janet and James Logan, hereafter referred to as Mother and Father.

The first house that Kath lived in was in Dalgety Street, St. Kilda when she was a baby. Then they came to the corner of Fraser Street to the flats, which are still there, before shifting to [Egap Court](#) in Nimmo Street (on the corner of Ashworth Street, probably number 111. The flats on the corner of Danks and Nimmo Streets used to be a very big house, Kath played with the little girl who lived there). The family then went to 233 Richardson Street before moving to the NE corner of Harold and Page Streets [diagonally opposite where the interview is being conducted]. Here a Chinese couple owned the place and they indicated to Kath's parents that they wanted to move to Middle Park. By this time Kath and George were married and they had had their baby, Kath had married from over there. They then shifted into Armstrong Street to board and then moved to Harold Street to board again. In the meantime the flat upstairs became vacant [where Kath presently lives, there are two flats, the upstairs flat has a separate entrance next door]. The lady down below promised Mother that when the upstairs flat became vacant they could have it. So Kath's parents shifted into the upstairs flat and Kath and her husband shifted in with them. Kath's daughter started school from the upstairs flat. Then this downstairs flat became vacant and Kath, George and Diane shifted down here, where Kath has been for 63 years!

Kath's Childhood. Kath attended the Middle Park Primary School, as did her husband and her daughter. Kath did know her future husband when they were at school, she knew him as one of the Baileys, everyone knew the Baileys of Hambledon Street. Up to the present day, Kath thinks that the Bailey family would have been in the shop for over 100 years (Edgar was in the shop for 50 years and George 35 years, retiring in 1983). When Kath was going to work she would ring Mother's order from work as Edgar delivered, using a horse and cart, but when the older of his 2 sons got a bike he would deliver the meat on his bike. Kath used to tell Mother to tell George not

to come until Saturday morning as there was nobody home, as Kath was home on Saturday mornings. So this is how long Kath knew George (in fact they went to school together). Kath can remember George dinking Kath to school on his bike and that is something that would not be allowed today!

School days at Middle Park. Kath always wore a uniform to school, consisting of a white blouse and a navy tunic and blazer. Kath recalled that during the depression Mother would wash the blouse but Kath does not know how she ever got it dry to iron in the morning so that Kath could wear it to school. It was certainly compulsory to wear the uniform and to look smart. On Monday mornings before they started they had to be in front for the flag (ceremony). This was always compulsory and they were all required to look smart, not as Kath thinks the students go to school now. They also had a jumper with a V-neck with a white stripe, the tunic, the blazer and the jumper were all navy. Kath could not recall what they wore in the summer. Kath's daughter also always wore a similar uniform to school.

Kath does not wish to go back to her school days, she was not a brilliant scholar – her main memory is sitting out watching the sports, eating frozen oranges from the little shop on the NW corner of Mills and Richardson Streets (the shop on the NE corner was a newspaper shop from where the students purchased their copies of the '*Record*'). The sports were held on what they called the 'school flat', which is still there although not so muddy today, and a temporary classroom has been put up at the side. The building that is now the Middle Park Kindergarten used to be called the 'Little School' where in Kath's time they started at age 5. Neither Kath nor her daughter went to Kindergarten. Children started at age 5 in the Little School and later progressed to the 'Big School'. Although uncertain as to how long they stayed in the Little School Kath does recall having a teacher there whom the little girls all thought was marvellous. Kath came home and told her mother his name was Mr. Lipshit which her mother did not think was correct! The following day Mother told Kath his name was Mr. Lipshut. Later they shifted to the Big School, eventually moving upstairs which was where they obtained their 'Merit' as this was a Central School. In those days you had no choice of what you wanted to do, you did what your parents wanted you to do. Kath's parents wanted her to do typing and shorthand, so this is what she did!

Stott's College. Kath went to the Stott's in Russell Street in the city. A new building has replaced the old Stotts. There was also Zerco's, a better college, and Bradshaw's which was on the site of the present Casino. Kath's husband had been there, he badly wanted to be a meat auctioneer, so when he left school he went to Bradshaws. But his Dad removed him from there saying that he was to be a butcher. In those days you had no say, you did what your parents said and you were not asked about it, you did it! Kath was at Stotts for 12 months, although Zercos was a two year course, and then Stotts got you a job.

Kath's initial working life. Kath's first job was in the city in McKillop Street, running between Bourke and Little Collins Streets, with an exclusive jeweller on the corner and was right near John Danks. Here she worked down in the basement for a funny old fellow for a couple of years and then he closed up. He sold milking gear for farmers, but eventually the business did not go well. Her employer was a real stickler. On one occasion he rang Mother to tell her that Kath had come to work without having gloves on! On another occasion he rang Mother to tell her she had come to work without a hat! Kath was very upset about these incidents thinking it was ridiculous. He was meticulous about the calibre of the work too.

Working for John Danks. Kath was out of work for about a month and then she went to work for John Danks, because her boyfriend worked there and told her they wanted someone up in the government office.

John Danks was in a very big three-storey building in Bourke Street, a hardware store similar to a Bunnings store of today. They were here for a very long time until they moved down Dandenong way. During the war they had different sections, at the time Kath joined she was in the government section, from which it was impossible to leave unless you got married. Here Kath was doing secretarial work in a big office where Kath was secretary to the managers of various stores such as the paint store and the hardware store going between the various managers. This made for variety in the work, Kath liked working at John Danks.

Kath's boyfriends. The boyfriend who told Kath about the position at John Danks was her first, whom she would have married, except that the war came along. George and Kath had their various girlfriends and boyfriends until the war started and then they got back together again. The first boyfriend Kath had met at the *Middle Park Lifesaving Club* on Beaconsfield Parade at the end of Nimmo Street. There was a big building that had been put in for swimmers to go in and have a shower and there was a toilet there. There was also an open building with a table tennis table and different other activities where all the young people from Middle Park met together. Further out was a diving board to which they could all swim out. There was a sign saying *Middle Park Surf Club* which was there for quite a long time. There was also a kiosk opposite the end of Nimmo Street where nowadays people walk, so if they wanted ice creams or drinks or anything like that they would go to the kiosk. This is where Kath met her boyfriend who worked at John Danks and he told her that they wanted somebody so Kath went there. Kath used to see this boyfriend every lunchtime. Kath always took her lunch to work, they couldn't afford to eat out. This boyfriend was taken into the militia and he went to Perth and they drifted apart.

George (Bailey) who was in the army, came down on leave and so they went out together before he returned. Twelve months later he came home on leave and they went out again. George then

proposed which Kath accepted thinking it was a good idea. She went in to her parents and announced that she was to be married in a fortnight! Kath was surprised at how Mother accepted this news so well! Kath recalls that all the women in Harold Street did all the baking as it was not possible to book in to any reception centre.

Kath and George's wedding. This was held at St. Anselm's [cr. Langridge Street and Park Road] where George had been in the choir and Kath went to Sunday School there. Diane, their daughter was also married at St. Anselm's so there was quite a family tradition which Kath is sorry to see it go. Kath thought it was a lovely intimate little church with an anglo-catholic tradition. Subsequently a small op (opportunity) shop was opened there which Kath did visit. The church was part of the little village of Middle Park but was unable to increase in numbers, only to go up. The wedding was on the Saturday of King's Birthday 1944 and the reception was held in St. Anselm's Hall, because they couldn't get anything else. [This is a previous hall than that demolished following the closure of the church.] The Old Buffers in their colourful jumpers (see later) came to the reception. It was not permitted to have drink in the hall. Friends of Kath and George loaned them their house nearby where guests could get a drink and then go back to the dancing in the hall. Dances used to be held in this hall.

As Kath was working in John Danks at this time one of the girls was part of a big family so they gave Kath all their clothing coupons and Kath and George gave them some meat! At the shop, which Kath thinks was Manton's, she had three dresses to pick from. If you didn't like these well you didn't have anything! Another girl donated a veil that she had. Kath's chief bridesmaid wore a frock that Kath had had made when she was a bridesmaid for a lass in Elwood, and the other bridesmaid wore one of her frocks that she had.

Kath is uncertain how her mother managed the catering for the reception with the rationing, although they did have a friend who had a lovely delicatessen in North Melbourne and Kath thinks that a lot of the food came from him. There were always odd ways of getting things during the war. Kath's mother got the wedding cake from Paterson's in Chapel Street.

Kath and George went to live with Kath's parents who were at this time on the NE corner of Harold and Page Streets. George went back into the army and Kath lived there until Diane, their only child, was born, by which time the Chinese owners wished to live in the house. These people had previously lived in Celestial Avenue off Little Bourke Street running a Chinese shop. Following this they took over a very big gift shop right down near the beach in Fitzroy Street [St. Kilda] called the *RGK* but they did not stay there for very long.

Kath and Diane continued to live with Kath's parents after they moved to the upstairs flat above where Kath lives now. Not long after they moved in upstairs Kath went back to work, that is when Diane went to school. Kath stayed in work until 1980 [she was 57 by then]. During this time she was working in Richmond at a lingerie manufacturer, then in Clarendon Street South Melbourne at

a washing machine manufacturer. Both these positions were in secretarial work. From Clarendon Street Kath went to the office of the South Melbourne Football Club until they moved to Sydney in 1980 when Kath thought it was time to bid goodbye! So George thought that if Kath was resigning it was time for him to retire too and leave the shop.

Shopping. While Kath worked in South Melbourne this meant that she used to shop in South Melbourne, when Coles would deliver the shopping. This delivery service was only cut out when they built the new complex. One day Kath filled the basket and went up to the girl who told Kath that they were not now delivering! So Kath left the trolley there and walked out! Kath had started with another shop that was up near Park Street [on the west side], from here she moved to Coles who were further down on the east side. Kath recalled that in the very early days when you paid it went into a thing and they pulled a jigger that went over to a box. Somebody would be sitting in the box and organised the change which was then sent back. Dimmeys in Richmond and Mantons in Bouke Street were other shops which had the same mechanism that flew across the ceiling.

Bailey's butcher shop. Edgar had started off the shop in Hambledon Street with a pony and jinker from which to deliver the meat. Edgar was George's father, Edgar had two sons - George and Norm who was seven years younger than George. George was brought into the shop and he delivered the meat using a wire basket on his bike. Then they purchased a Ford car for the deliveries. Next door to the butcher's shop was a licensed grocer, Cunningham's, where there were big cheeses and butter.

When Kath finished her day at work she used to go down and do the till for George and help tidy up, she never actually worked in the shop, Kath only dealt with the money and not with the meat. George expected Kath to know all the customers but Kath would not have a clue because these women would be going in the shop all the week but Kath never saw them. She just put a grin on her face and said "Yes, yes, how are you" but she did not have a clue who they were! But everybody knew the Baileys. This was just an ordinary butcher's shop and they were the last butcher's shop to have sawdust on the floor. When the Health Inspector came on one occasion he said he thought it was time they did all the walls and put in a concrete floor, all of which would cost about \$25,000. But Kath commented to George that it was not worth the expense before he retired. So he decided to have a garage sale and sell everything and get out. Now these buildings are converted into houses. Kath went down there when they were auctioning the house after it had all been modernised. The entrance had been moved, upstairs were the bedrooms. Mr. and Mrs. Bailey had lived over the shop, their house was entered from Erskine Street at the back. Kath thinks that the licensed grocer lasted a few months after the Bailey's shop, but it had changed hands from Cunningham's who had been very popular and then it changed hands two or three times. This was sold after the Baileys and two flats were put on the corner and they redid the

shop. Next to the shop there was a lolly shop and then a Chinese laundry which upstairs was a brothel! If he was open for business he had a towel hung over the back upstairs window. This is what Edgar used to tell Kath – she presumes it is true! Further down on the very corner, there is a lane there and the block goes to a point, there used to be greengrocer. This is all housing now. Kath presumes that because the licensed grocer was the only remaining shop and he did not think it was worth it. Supermarkets made a big, big difference to the small shops.

Baileys was a real butcher's shop with an enormous wooden block and they bought their meat as they wanted it. It was not all cut and ready, the cutting was done in front of the customer. George used to cut the fat and Kath would say to him that this was all profit that he was cutting off, nevertheless George did still trim the meat, providing beautiful meat the likes of which Kath has not had or been able to find since. But it didn't pay.

Edgar and George were the butchers while Norm went to the abattoirs at Geelong to buy the meat. Baileys had a big truck for bringing this meat back, these were the whole carcasses that were broken down in the shop after hanging on rails. They had a very big refrigerator that all the meat went into because they believed in hanging it for awhile. Sometimes Norm would go in and give the other two men a hand on Fridays and Saturdays when they were busy. When Edgar retired they had to employ someone else.

On Saturday Edgar would do the till and put the money in the sawdust which was in big bags out the back waiting to be put on the floor on Monday. On one occasion (maybe King's birthday) Les Cunningham from next door who was in the Old Buffers picked up the bags of sawdust as they wanted it for the Old Buffers. Suddenly Edgar realised that his money was down at the park [Albert Park] but he was able to get it back before Les had opened it up!

Old Buffers. This event had been going for years and years in aid of Prince Henry's Hospital. They did have a ward there that Kath thinks was called the Old Buffers ward. Next door to Sam Brown in Canterbury Road there was a knitting mill where numerous fluffy jumpers were made to be worn by all the Old Buffers for the march. There would also be police marching and marching girls and marching bands who started off at the *Middle Park Swimming Baths* and came straight down Armstrong Street. This was quite a thing in Middle Park. When it was all over Ron Mc Dermot and his wife Mary, together with their 2 children, came to the Bailey's flat for morning tea. It was a very big day, everyone attended. One of the organisers, Roy Eddington, would dress up for the parade. One year he wore a white shirt together with a bra and his face blackened, another year he mimicked the Pelaco advertisement 'Mine tinkit they fit'. He was a very funny fellow.

The Old Buffers were local identities such as Sam Brown and Les Cunningham.

Once in the park, one of the events was held on the back of an open tray truck which the Lifesaving Club were loaned. On the back was a spinning wheel. They had lots of prizes that had been donated. The girls would sell the raffle tickets and the boys were up on the truck spinning the

wheel. This is how they raised the money. Some of the boys from the South Melbourne Football Club came over and put on a game. There were all sorts of events. Kath cannot recall whether they sold food there.

Some bright person thought it would be good to hold this event in Kerferd Road, or was it Victoria Avenue, instead of Armstrong Street, but it just fizzled because nobody went to it. Whereas down here this was THE day for Middle Park, always being held on the King's birthday. The raffles started on the Saturday and Sunday and on the Monday they had the procession.

Kath's father. Father was brought out here from England as a manager for the roll turner *Melbourne Roll Turning* in a street off Sturt Street, South Melbourne. He was with them for years and years. Then Mother came out here and married Father. Father could turn his roll turning skills to everything, making things modern things that we have now, years ago. He made a lot of things for Diane when she was tiny. Kath is uncertain whether there are any roll turners now. Father worked at this enormous factory just off Sturt Street where if you went in to see him there were big hot things with flames and all one could see was the steaming steel coming out of the rolls. Kath is uncertain what they used them for. There was an even bigger factory opposite called the *Australian Roll Turning* so evidently this was good business at the time. All of these are gone now. Father must have been at the *Melbourne Roll Turning* when Kath was at Danks, because he got an offer from another business called *KM Roll Turners* in Richmond. Father suggested to Kath that if he went there perhaps she would go too as his secretary, but Kath was not keen so Father decided not to go either. When Father retired he thought that he had had enough, but they sent a taxi from Footscray every day to pick him up and bring him home because they wanted him so much!

Shops in Middle Park. Just down from the Baileys in Hambleton Street was Jacoby's who had a nice butcher's shop in Richardson Street. Next to Jacoby's was a milk shop, sometimes known as a milk bar or a lolly shop where sweets and that sort of thing was sold. Then there was another butcher. Kath thinks that at one stage there were five butchers in Middle Park who were all doing well. There was another going up towards the station in Armstrong Street. The paper shop has always been located in the same shop as long as Kath can remember. Next door was Comers who ran a bookie in a lolly shop.

In Richardson Street there was a greengrocer, a grocer - Mr and Mrs Marsh - where when the bill was paid, which Kath did every week for Mother, she would receive a twist of paper with lollies in it. Next to that now is a beauty place, next door they sold shoes, then another fruit shop run by Fishers and then a delicatessen. Next to this was the Methodist Church Sunday School and on the corner was a very, very good draper Dowsett's where they sold ladies wear and wonderful menswear. This was on the corner of Armstrong and Richardson Streets. This shop is now called *Gum Tree* and is currently similar to a delicatessen. Kath has been there but has not returned.

Kath would buy her clothes in the city, partly because she worked in the city but also because she did like window shopping.

When they lived in the flat where Kath presently lives they had things delivered, such as milk and groceries, including bread, – these are the items mentioned earlier from Coles – she had many things delivered. Kath still has a few things delivered now. There were good shops and good people in shops then, nowadays she feels they do not want to know you when you go into a shop or give you a smile these days. The shop, on the corner of Armstrong and Richardson Streets, diagonally opposite Dowsetts, has been a milk bar for years and years even though it has been modernised now. Kath recalls that when she was going to school with the girls who lived there with their parents, the owner would buy speck fruit from the greengrocer further down and they would get all the speck fruit and cut the bad parts out of them. Speck fruit was fruit that had been held over the weekend and would not last. He would fill the ice block trays and then sell the ice blocks full of fruit salad. This was a very good business, he also put cream on the top which froze - Kath thought they were very nice.

Where the IGA is now, Mrs. Miller had a draper's shop with shelves right up high and although she was not a young person she would get up on the ladder and get whatever you wanted from these shelves. For sheets and pillow slips you always went to Mrs Miller. Kath thought she had a nice business there. She wishes it was still possible to buy things like wool and knitting needles and sewing needles locally. Kath thinks there are too many dining places and not enough shops selling the required goods. There used to be a type of emporium in Clarendon Street South Melbourne, although not a very big one but which sold a variety of goods, called Tippings, and it did not matter what you wanted you could almost always get it at Tippings. Kath thinks that today there are not too many frock shops from which an older person can purchase. There was another shop in Armstrong Street that sold very good second-hand clothing, it was possible to sell clothes to them as well as buy. Another fellow in Armstrong Street with only a small shop sold paintings and decorative items for the house. On the corner of Armstrong Street and Canterbury Road, where the bike shop was, was a very big chemist, whose name may have been Adler's, but they shifted to South Melbourne. After this the bike shop went in there and that lasted a long time.

The Beach. When Kath went swimming she always met her friends at the Surf Club at the end of Nimmo Street, whereas at the end of Armstrong Street was the *Middle Park Swimming Baths* with enclosed swimming baths. At Nimmo Street you could swim out to the diving board and they would come out in a boat from the baths to tell you that there was a shark in the area, so, very brightly, the young people swam back in the water to the sand rather than sitting on the board for a day waiting for the shark to arrive! The beach was about the same width that it is now. Kath does not remember the beach without the bluestone wall.

Kath Bailey's photos



PHOTOS BELONGING TO
KATH BAILEY, COPIED WITH
HER PERMISSION

1, 2 and 3 Old Buffers Parade in
Armstrong St:

1. Mounted Police as part of
the Parade
2. Roy Eddington (see text) at
corner of Page St. (SE cr.)
3. Parade at corner of Page St.
(SW cr.)

4. Kath Bailey with friends on
beach in front of *Middle Park
Surf Club*

Notice reads :

Yes! This is the Middle Park Surf Club
We possess the best club rooms on
the foreshore, Our own dressing sheds
& shower rooms for ladies & gents
Children have their own cubicles
For particulars & membership enquire
at club house.

Competitive events every Sunday
'Be in the swim with the Surf Club

