

## **Grew Up in The Bush with the City Just Over the Hill**

At this time when Templestowe Uniting Church is being greatly changed, I have many reminiscences of the earlier days.

Arthur Streeton's acclaimed picture, "Golden Summer", painted in 1889, illuminates the country reaching east beyond the high ridge at Eaglemont, a hilltop that stretched from land that will later contain Ivanhoe Grammar around past the Austin Hospital. The booming city of Melbourne is behind us; a few figures play in the sunlit hilltop. Beyond to the east is the whole Yarra Valley, a series of darker bush ridges rolling all the way to the Dandenongs and Great Dividing Range. The second of those ridges into the distance are the Templestowe hilltops where the pioneering Smith family and a few other Presbyterians were to found a church in 1895, a wooden building with a tin roof on a slope which also looked eastward up the Valley, leaving Melbourne and its suburbs behind, back over the hill.

*Golden Summer Eaglemont. A. Streeton. Detail.*



In 1880, a few years before Streeton was there, the Templestowe Methodists built their wooden church higher up the hill by the Shire Hall and Mechanics Institute – both buildings gone now; the Mechanics Institute absorbed by the Memorial Hall in 1922, and the Methodist Church in 1932, after a fire, was moved to East Preston. The Methodists joined with the Presbyterians, so early that the Uniting Church when it came 45 years later was no great innovation.

I grew up just over the next ridge to the East, at “Glencairn” Main Road Templestowe, just past Newmans Road on the Main Warrandyte Road, the family orchard. Born a few years after that early Methodist-Presbyterian merger, I could not say which families were which - but I knew well some of the main pioneer Presbyterian founders. My grandmother, Isabella, came from a City Presbyterian church, married the son of a German-speaking Lutheran family, and made a firm place for her family among the Presbyterians of Templestowe from 1905 onwards.

When we were middling-sized kids in the orchard, Grandma Bella would take us walking quite often. In the gathering dark she would walk us the couple of hundred yards up to the 13 milepost at the hilltop at Newman’s Rd to see the ‘*fairy lights*’. Glencairn homestead too was built on the east slope of the high hill; it looked into the dark, up the Yarra Valley to the ranges, a great vista of orchards, bushland, mountains and mists. We grew up in the bush, but grandma was longing for her childhood days in North Fitzroy, keen for us to look back to the distant City.

Grandma came from North Fitzroy, way back when she married grandpa. She wanted us to know that Melbourne was not too far away: there are the lights of the City twinkling just off to the west, Melbourne thirteen miles over there! We could, in fact, only see as far as the Eaglemont hilltop, with its big Austin Hospital chimney, but there were enough twinkling lights to back up grandma’s talk of exciting people and marvellous places.

Yes, we did go to Melbourne and we then came home to the farm. The family shopped in Heidelberg, and at Smith St, and at Clifton Hill. I have traumatic recollections of being stuck under a display cabinet in Myers, a small too-adventurous lad in a big city store. But our Templestowe was country, six miles from the train at Box Hill, or at Heidelberg, whichever (as it still is). Our little wooden church on that nearby hillside was a small offshoot of Scots Church, Heidelberg. Mr Harland, the minister came for 9.30 Service, and rushed off for 11 o’clock at the big church at Heidelberg. Our Sunday School came on after church, in the same smallish building with its smaller Vestry, and two distant corrugated iron outhouses in the back corner, all flanked by cypress hedges. Lots of room for horse-drawn buggies and jinkers, and a growing number of cars in the yard around.

In the 1960s, grandma’s City came over the hill and began to absorb the farms, orchards and country estates. Subdivision had arrived. Through the next two decades the church, the farms, struggled to grow and adapt, and our little town became a Suburb, and a really valued Suburb at that. The City came over the hill for us in the decade of the 1960s, look at Templestowe now!

I hear from afar that the Templestowe Church, which was Presbyterian in my childhood, and now happily Uniting Church, is in 2019 embarking on a great new development. God bless Manningham, God bless us all in this time of change and aspiration!

I have many memories to share of the events, people and processes of growth. It all happened in the usual gentle, subtle way that change changes us. I have my bits of the story, but it's a larger unfolding. As the Manningham Parish changes its focus and development to take account of recent decisions, it is Templestowe's bit of the story that I carry. I know little of Deep Creek, Pilgrim and George St, and not much of Wesley Church, I was a minister far away as they grew and flourished.

Henry White and Elizabeth Raney, early arrivals from England, settled in Doncaster East in 1856, and only ten years later were instrumental in founding the Methodist Church in Blackburn Rd at Doncaster Rd corner, later called Wesley Church, and it is now gone. Henry came from Sussex in 1849, moved to Melbourne in 1851, met Elizabeth soon after, and they married at St. Peter's Eastern Hill in 1852. I still have her early metallic photograph and her Book of Common Prayer. They were my mother's grandparents. Their daughter Jane married Rowland Hill and the couple settled at "Devondale" at the end of Cave Hill Road, Lilydale, where my mother Dorothy was born.

Jane Hill and her six children and families lived all their lives as farming people. Grandma Hill was not the grandmother who grew up in the big city, she was definitely 'country' family and in her widowhood lived at Henley Estate in the Christmas Hills, surrounded by wonderful bushland and rich flats along the Yarra River. We youngsters enjoyed visiting and exploring the bush in the 1940s and 50s.

My father's family, on the other hand, lived on our orchard right beside us. There are big books about Henry White and his descendants, and about Rowland Hill, his ancestors and descendants. Robert Latimer edited "*Fruits of the Orchard*", the story of Henry and Elizabeth White, published by a family committee in 1998; and my mother Dorothy was well involved in the book. In 1999, 'Tree of Life Publishing' produced for a family committee "*John and Naomi Hill, Pioneers in Australia from 1841*", compiled by Ronald H Hill; again Dorothy Aumann my mother was big on the committee and at the launch, at St. Margaret's church Burwood (there are prominent Hills buried in the Burwood Cemetery). Dorothy Hill (Aumann)'s family were prosperous rural farmers, on both sides and handed on a strong rural tradition of church support and christian caring.

John Milne Aumann, my father, grew up in Templestowe on the orchard at 'Glencairn', the only child of Isabella McNeil and Carl Aumann. They were another sort of mix, multicultural in an anglo community. Carl grew up in the Doncaster Trinity Lutheran Church, went to Pastor Schramm's original German School, and remembered the original wooden Church, which used to be in the Schramm Reserve, its graveyard is still there on the hilltop behind the History Society. At the *Aumann Family Reunion* in 1993, I went with a large group to the Old German Cemetery on the hill there and we re-dedicated a new Tombstone to our original Settler, Carl Samuel Aumann, who came to Melbourne in 1853, from Profen in Silesia, then in Prussia, now in Poland. The original gravestone had been badly defaced through two World Wars. The Aumanns and many other families then were primarily

religious refugees, as they adhered to an older Lutheran church order, and refused the Emperor's new unified state church! The Aumann family gave the land for the second Lutheran Church still extant in Bismarck St., Doncaster, now called Victoria St.

My old schooldays friend Eric Uebergang compiled the big Book on the Aumann Family, "*Carl Samuel Aumann, The Family History 1853-1993*". His mother, Bertha, was an Aumann; he had first published the *Uebergang Family History*, which was launched earlier, (I'm almost certain it happened at a Reunion in Horsham). His Uebergang family is still extended across the Wimmera and far beyond. Bert and Bertha, his parents had an orchard property in Serpells Rd, Templestowe, which I remember from lots of visits. They were Anglican, at old Christ Church in Church St Templestowe, which is also now gone. So I didn't know them at church, but Eric and I stuck together at school, so we talked often, expounding our different churches. The Rev Tom Thomas was Anglican Rector at the larger Holy Trinity Doncaster, and came to give Religious Instruction at Templestowe School, Mr Thomas went on to be Dean of the Cathedral. Bertha played the organ at Christ Church, Eric took over as he grew to it, and later was Organist at Holy Trinity for many years. Eric's two family books included everyone in both the Uebergang and Aumann families, and so took in Lutherans, Anglicans, Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists and others, often with their church involvements noted and valued.

But Isabella "Bella" Aumann, my grandma, was Scots. Her family emigrated from Greenock near Glasgow; her father worked for a Ship's Chandler in the Melbourne Port. Later she and her youngest brother ran a Hay and Corn Store at the corner of Best and Scotchmer Streets in North Fitzroy. From there she met my grandfather, most probably at the Queen Victoria Market where Carl had Stall L110 from the early 1900s. His son Jack, and later his grandson Neil, my brother, sold fruit at Stall L110, up till the 1960s.

Carl and his brother in their early years bought 60 acres of land on the Main Warrandyte Road and divided it in two; Carl got the hilltop 30 acres. Uncle August down the hill, farthest from the city, was Lutheran. Our house however was almost at the hilltop still looking east, close to today's Dewpond Court. Grandfather Carl and Bella moved into the new home in 1905, with widest views up the Yarra Valley, and across to the Dandenong Ranges. Jack was born a year later; Bella was not so young and there were no other children. Bella saw to it that the Glencairn family became part of the Presbyterian community for miles around.

We lived close to the church elders. Joe Smith lived on the next hillside; our farm was carved out of the original Smith 'square mile' of land. The church organist, Mrs Ivy Miller lived up the hill at the Newman's Rd corner, a niece of Joe Smith. Bill Ross lived just a way down Newmans Rd, he was a church Elder; and you could see the Grass's house over on Blackburn Rd from our hilltop; Mr Grass was an elder too.

Alfred and Ivy Miller's son, Alf, (like his dad) went to Scotch College, which was a bone of contention with my mother, because the Principal Mr Gilvray wouldn't take me on board. Alf Miller became an organist like his mother, but at Hawthorn Presbyterian, and later an elder, organist and Choir Leader at Scots Church Melbourne; and a senior executive at ICI. I went to Box Hill High School. I eventually succeeded Ivy Miller as Sunday School

Superintendent at Templestowe, in the days when the town was starting to grow larger. And by age 21, I was a student for ministry.

The district Presbyterian church was established in the late 1800s, there are a few sources for its history, - the Centenary History of Scots Church Heidelberg, '*A Barn in Bulleen*', has a substantial section, and later the Templestowe people did a history, led by Dorothy Aumann, '*Fruits of the Spirit*'.

In 1943 I was Ten.

The Aumann family went to Church Sunday by Sunday, sat in the Aumann family pew, just one row behind the Session Clerk, Joe Smith - Grandma, Grandpa, Mum, Dad, and little Neil and Me, Keren came later. We were allowed to take off our shoes, and dad put a rug on the seat so we could stand on it and read from the hymnbook with them. When it was Communion we had to put on our shoes, and go out, and wait outside. We listened through the ventilators, it was very holy!

Templestowe town was still quite small. At the War Memorial Corner, Guerin's Grocer's shop looked across James St. at Mullin's Blacksmith and Coachbuilder, where Jack Mullins also sold petrol. Up the hill was the School and the Memorial Hall. That was about it. The Presbyterian Church was two streets away to the North, the Church of England was in Church Street, half way to the Cemetery; the Cool Store was a long way off on Fitzsimmons Flats.

In our family, Mum taught in Sunday School after church was over, Dad went home and made some tomato soup out of a tin, for us to have dinner when we got home. When we were old enough for Sunday School we had the Littlies class in the Vestry, and two classes in the church. Mrs Miller taught the Big Class. We practised songs for Sunday School Anniversary from paper folders with jolly hymns with lots of Hallelujahs.

If you needed the toilet it was a long way outside to the back corners of the big cypress hedge, boys on the right and girls on the left. If your mother was taking her turn to 'do' the church flowers on Saturday, she could get water from a tap in the Vestry, the corrugated iron water tank was on a stand outside, it did not have a proper top so the water was always full of wrigglers, and there were always mosquitos around the tank. Here are some of the people who came to church when I was ten. You can see them in the photograph, in front of the big cypress trees near the church front gate.



Elders and Managers 1943

Front row - Robert Hillhouse, Alex Ross, Rev Coledge Harland, Eric Henshaw, Frederick Grass

Standing - Roy Mundy, Jos Smith, Carl Aumann, Jack Aumann

Absent - Howard Smith (in the forces), Alf Miller

*This Photograph of the combined Church Session (elders) and Board of Management is dated 1943. I haven't located the original, but this copy was published in "Fruits of the Spirit" the 1980s History of Templestowe.*

**Rev. Coledge Harland** was our minister, he came from Heidelberg. Church was at half-past-nine (morning), and he had to drive quickly back to Scots Church for 11 am Service there. Mr Harland was a tall man with two teen age sons, who sometimes worked on our orchard. Harland is the man on the camel on the \$20 Note; he came to Heidelberg from Inland Australia where he had worked with John Flynn.

**Joe Smith** may not yet be Session Clerk in 1943, he is the big man in the back row. Probably when I was ten, Fred Grass was the leader of the elders. We knew Mr Smith well indeed, his orchard was across the Main Road from ours, all the way to Newman's Rd and Blackburn Rd. The Smith family were early settlers, founders of the Templestowe Church. Grandpa Aumann had bought his land from the Smiths in the 1880s Depression. Joe was single, his sister lived in Mont Park Hospital, he was alone, but cared for by his niece Mrs Ivy Miller whose family lived in the big brick house at the Newman's Rd corner, alongside the 13mile post and our Bus Stop. We loved exploring and picking wildflowers in Joe Smith's Bush Paddock. It was Joe Smith's large benefaction which built the New Church.

**Carl Aumann** stands alongside Joe, he has the moustache. My grandfather, he grew up in a large Doncaster, German, Lutheran family. How he came to marry my grandmother, of Presbyterian Scots extraction is quite unknown, but they were a great and strong family, loving and successful. Carl kept in touch with his Lutheran family who lived nearby, but he was now quietly Presbyterian. He is pictured here because he was a member of the Board of Management, they never quite got to make him an elder. There had been strife and tension during the German War, but he came through serene and quietly confident.



**Jack Aumann**, Carl's son, our father, is alongside him on the end at the back. Jack grew up in the Templestowe Church from his childhood in World War 1. In 1918 the Heidelberg Church Magazine acknowledged that twelve-year-old Jack had saved up his money and bought the Templestowe Church a new Front Door Mat. He was Church Treasurer through our childhood and youth. We remember well how the Sunday collection was counted and accounted for, Dad brought it home and it went, loose, up on top of the wardrobe where it was accessible to tall adults. Carl and Jack were fruitgrowers at "Glencairn" Main Road Templestowe. Each week when Dad came home from market after selling his fruit, he stopped in Burgundy St Heidelberg and banked his takings at the Commercial Bank, opposite Brierty's Grocers. He bought food and stuff, then went across the road to the State Savings Bank to bank the Church money. Dad did the banking and handled the money, but Mother did the accounting – as well as the church flowers, Sunday School, P W M U and Church Socials etc.

**Roy Mundy**, the man on the other end at the back, also lived up our way, Main Rd just past where Chivers Rd is today. I don't remember him well, nor his family (he is not my Uncle Roy J R Mundy, who married mum's sister Daisy). I think this Roy would have been a Templestowe Methodist; by this time he is in the picture as a Board of Management member. He had an orchard truck with an open body for carting cases of fruit, as we did too. They used those trucks for Sunday School Picnics. Once a year the church had a trip to the beach, we travelled all the way down Warragul Road to Mordialloc Beach in the back of a couple of orchard trucks. I remember my father cleaning out our big truck, putting a tarpaulin around the railings to break the wind, and we all children and adults sat on Sunday School form in the back of the truck, rugs to keep you warm, all the way to the Beach.

**Bob Hillhouse**, the one with the little toothbrush moustache in the front. His orchard ran along the Green Gully Creek from Porter St to Reynolds Road. Bob was a Shire councillor, and here he is on the Board of Management. The Board ran the management concerns of the church and paid the bills, the Elders (the Church Session) ran the Policy and Pastoral Care. As children we were free to explore the Hillhouse bush paddocks, gather wildflowers, and find the places where bush orchids flourished; as we were also free to roam Joe Smith's bush.

**Alex Ross**, sitting to the right of the minister, must have been the Session Clerk. My memory is that Joe Smith was always the Clerk, but that must have begun later. The Ross family lived in Newman's Road, not far from opposite Joe Smith's house. My grandmother was a good friend of Mrs Ross. Like the Smiths, the various Ross families all had the same strong Scots origins.

**Eric Henshaw** lived near the corner of Porter St between Williamson's Rd and the Sports Ground. I know he was not an 'old' Templestowe family, he had settled there recently. He was young and enthusiastic, and a great help to the Board of Management. Later he moved away, so I have little information.

**Fred Grass** was an elder, and I do remember Fred and **his wife Elsie**. Older people, they took an interest in us children. When I was older, riding a horse to Box Hill High School every day the Grasses looked out for me. There was an occasion when the pony was

frightened by a dog, and it bolted. I fell off! It was my luck that the little Grass car happened to be passing and they picked me up and dusted me down. And reported me to my parents for riding furiously. In earlier days they had a dairy farm running down towards the river, across the Main Road from the Cool Store and kept a dairy where everyone came to buy milk.

**Howard Smith.** The caption tells us he was 'in the forces'. 1943 was deep in World War 2, the Atkinson St. Smiths had the grandest house around and were strongly patriotic, Howard was the oldest son. Another branch of the Scots Smiths. I remember Ellen, she would have been a sister to Howard, more our age as children. Their vast house is still shining at the Williamsons Rd end of Atkinson Street.

**Alf Miller** was absent for the photo. We remember him well, a neighbour of ours, he was the husband of **Mrs Miller, Ivy (Smith)**, church organist, our Sunday School Superintendent, father of young Alfie who was our age. But they were 'city people' and we didn't mix much. Mrs Miller had come from the large Hawthorn Presbyterian church, and he probably had too. I remember his lovely pointer dogs.

That's the list of Elders and Managers, but there were other notables.

**Mrs Fraser and her daughter Mrs Turner.** The Turners lived in the big new brick home on a hilltop which is now part of Westerfold Park, you could see it clearly from the church gate. I have no memory of Mr Turner, he was a solicitor in the city, I'm told. But the wife and her mother were gracious ladies, who were often at church and at functions. Perhaps the first of the city 'invasion' of rural Templestowe.

**Ken "Cocky" Edgar** was sometimes at Sunday School, had a shock of red hair, and made a name for himself at school and around the area. Poor Mrs Edgar, his mother, must have had a hard time of it; her husband was the well-paid refrigeration engineer in charge of the local Orchardists Cool Store, employed by the Co-Op to run the vast refrigerated storage and ensure good preservation and slow ripening for all the shareholders stored apples and other fruit. The family lived on the property and were in attendance 24/7. We hardly knew Mr and Mrs, but the son, Ken, and daughter, Olive, became well known.

**The Morrison family**, from down by the River at the end of Homestead Road, Wattie Morrison a good friend of my grandfather, who had land down there. Notable was his daughter, **Rene Morrison**. My mother in the 1930s, as a new arrival, gathered a group of young girls into a Presbyterian Girls Fellowship group. Rene Morrison became a great leader in the P W M U. After marriage, **Rene Sullivan** went on to be a strength in the breakaway Presbyterian Church at Union. I taught her son John in Sunday School, he went on to become a surgeon.

**Joe and Doris Beale** were most likely from the Methodist persuasion. Mrs Beale filled in at the organ, and was a leader in women's work, the Beales lived on the hill above the Sports Ground, just behind the Tennis Courts. Active in church and community, we saw more of her than of him at church. Their daughter **Dorothy married Don Blackie** in later times, they carried on the family style of enthusiastic involvement.



Others I remember were **George Hawthorn**, who helped our father at times with pruning fruit trees and such, and **Bill Mentiplay and** family; they each lived in places down the end of Newman's Rd.

### People Came and Templestowe Grew as I came up to Twenty One

Slowly at first and later with a rush our little country church transformed to absorb all the people who came over the hill and found our ridges and valleys a great place to live. Orchards and farms became uneconomic because land values rose and the city intervened. Subdivision brought capital and change to the old families, and the church benefited from an influx of wonderful newcomers. Here are just a few, my recollection is limited because I left for University in 1956, and the few years leading up to that had already taken me further afield.

**Alan and Beatrice Ramsey.** In 1954 I was accepted to train for the ministry, though I had to take a year to complete matriculation. It was also the year I turned 21. I remember so thankfully my party, Alan Ramsey, who was by then the Session Clerk presented me with a splendid green Fountain Pen. The Ramseys were significant folk, they had moved out from the Canterbury Presbyterian congregation when they built a home on the banks of the Yarra not far from the church. Bea was a small, quiet lady with a wonderful gift for friendship, and moved easily into church groups; Alan was already an elder at Canterbury, so he joined the Session. He was the Ramsey in Ramsey Ware Publishing, managerial and able. He led the Session through the time of growth and building, separation from Heidelberg, and calling a minister. Tom, their son went on to a career in politics, becoming a state MLA; son Bill Ramsey trained as a doctor, became a surgeon, went to Papua New Guinea to a missionary hospital and pioneered remedial surgery for leprosy disabled people. Their daughter, Mary continued her mother's involvement at Templestowe and with the church.

**Cliff "Tip" Morris and Dawn (Coates)** were more significant newcomers, and they built a home in Porter St, we could easily see it from our backyard. Tip was a Dentist in the T&G Building in Collins St; and soon became our family dentist. Dawn was a sister to the Victorian Chief Secretary, and they were wonderful neighbours. They had Church of Christ connections, but easily linked up with Templestowe Presbyterian, and brought influence and enthusiasm, commitment and community care to us all. Their eldest daughter Jill was a good friend of my sister Keren who shared the love of their horses; Jill went on to marry locally. Because of Tip's enthusiasm there was a weekly Square Dance in the Memorial Hall on Thursdays, and Badminton competition there on Tuesdays. I recall, as a young engineering student drawing a shaky concept drawing for the new timber Church Hall, they got built just above the church to accommodate growing numbers, it was based on an Education Department concept. Somewhere there is still a copy of the pamphlet with that picture for fund raising. Two of the younger Morris children, Penny and Chris, went on to found the Computershare company, and to own the Portsea Pub. Tony and Chris often worked with our father on orchard chores, picking fruit, driving tractors, helping with animals.

**The Templestowe Cool Store is long gone**, but it was still carrying on in the 1950s. There was less fruit, and other sorts of cool storage took some space. And there was a new Engineer, **Alan Mason** was everybody's friend and helper, and a good manager of the declining facility as commercial fruitgrowing was disappearing. And he contributed to the church as well. The Cool Store Coop was envisaged in the early 1900s by my grandfather's generation, and finally opened, no doubt with much difficulty, at the end of the Great War. It had served the main fruitgrowing enterprise of the 1920-1940 years, it was now old technology. To us youngsters, the Gas Generator, the great one-cylinder gas engine with its huge wheels, and the water-cooled cooling towers were the sign of modern industry and real power. On a clear night two miles away and over the hill we children could just hear the big engine start up with a groan and go slowly banging away in the night, it must have disturbed neighbours. There is a photograph of the engine room as it was being demolished, you can see it on the "I Grew Up in Templestowe" website.

Other incoming families swelled the congregation in the little church. Eventually the strong growth led to the building of the new church, spurred by Joe Smith's benefaction, during the ministry of the first Templestowe minister, **Rev Dr David Merritt**. Among the newcomers recall **Bill and Mrs Brain** and family, and **Bob and Mrs Millard**, sadly I don't have more names. During my six years at Ormond College, one of the Millard boys, John, was also resident and contemplating ministry. I recall that the elders had a tricky issue in the growing old church, where all the old families had their accustomed pew to sit in. However, the Mentiplay family hadn't come for a few weeks, they arrived and were dismayed to find the Brain family filling their pew. Arrangements were quickly made, but it was a sign of the times, so different from today.

Now the whole Templestowe property is being refurbished and rearranged, there will be another stage. My life moved on from the little wooden church, just as Templestowe moved on from the little church to the big one. By the time my dad laid the foundation stone for the new 'Joe Smith' Church I was minister at Mirboo North. Soon after **Rev John Howard** who had trained with me, came to Templestowe. My father's Funeral Service brought me back a few months later. **Jack Aumann** was by then a long-standing elder, and a few years after his death Alan Ramsey, the Session Clerk wrote to **Dorothy Aumann**, my mother, in the U K where she was visiting for the Chelsea Flower show. She was asked to become Templestowe's first woman elder, which in 1971 was a new possibility. We have a photograph of her sitting in the front of an Indigenous gathering for Country at a Templestowe Festival, at which she was recognized as an honorary Indigenous elder. Many years later, and after I had retired, my mother died, 101 years old and a matriarch at Templestowe, town and church.



*Dorothy Aumann at Indigenous Gathering in the 1990s, she is seated at right, (hat)  
We can identify the old State School building behind.*