

SWAN SHIRE BRIDGES PROJECT

donated synopses of interviews with

JOHN BARRETT-LENNARD *OH 2608/1*
MAY DE BURGH
JAMES DUFF
DON EDGECOMBE
DERRICK GOLDSPINK
JACK HALLATT
JUDY HAMERSLEY
HERBERT FAMILY
CHARLES HYNE
DOUG KENDALL
LEN MARSHALL
ROSEMARY McBEATH
GRACE McLEAN
PAM MONROE
KATHLEEN NAPIER
WILLIAM ROBINSON
MAUREEN (MIKE) WILLIAMS

**MIDLAND, GUILDFORD AND DISTRICT
MIDLAND BRIDGES**

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BRIDGES PROJECT

The project had its genesis in an idea put forward by Joan Pope in 1990 when she was employed by the Shire of Swan as a Community Arts Worker. She was struck by the number of bridges in the Swan Valley and the impact and importance of them. The seed took some two years to grow and then the Shire, through its Community Services Division, put aside funding for the project.

Ruth Andrew

21 June 1995

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Today's date 19 March 1993.

John Barrett-Lennard.

Edward Pommeroy was the first Barrett-Lennard and he settled at St Leonard's at West Swan. Stirling came out in May 1829 and he came out in August 1829. He was given a grant of land - something like 2,000 acres on the Swan - original grant, but I think it ended up as a total of about 13,000 acres. When he came out, he came out with all his servants and butlers, and obviously with the best silver, plenty of horses and cattle and stock for his land. But in those early years when Captain Fremantle came back again - he came out 6 months before Stirling - and he said what a marvellous property that Edward Pommeroy had compared with the other settlers. He was extremely disappointed that the settlers hadn't built good, solid homes and the existing house is still there at St Leonards. But one of the things that happened to him, while he was up looking for better land at York and Beverley, one of his carpenters put wood shavings on the fire and he had a thatched roof and the whole house got burned down.

They say the next Barrett-Lennard then, Edward, he got into financial difficulties. One of the major problems for the early settlers was it took 6 months for a ship to get out and 6 months for a ship to get back again. So it became very difficult for them to sell their goods. And they wanted shoes, hammers and axes and various things for the houses. It was very difficult when you had to wait 12 months to get anything back. Consequently, I don't know whether interest rates rose or whatever, but in 1840 there was a terrible depression and obviously he got caught up in that depression. And maybe couldn't find money for the rates and that, that he had to pay. Then the Hardey's came out - with lots of money the next lot of people, and he married one of the Hardey's from Tranby.

It wasn't until my grandfather, George, got involved with all the finances and helped with his brothers and sisters and, before Edward died, all his debts were paid. George was Edward's son. He was a son of the Hardey's. George was apparently brought up in a much tougher sort of world - the early Barrett-Lennards didn't have much business sense, I think. They probably had everything given

to them - handed on a golden plate. Whereas George was on the other foot - he came into an area where there was no money whatsoever, his father was virtually bank-rupt and he got out of that and he owned all the properties around - he owned Millendon, Henley Park and the property out here called Belhus was called Ellen Brook Farm at the time, where there used to be an old clay deposit where they made bricks and there is a lime kiln where they made their burnt lime to make quicklime and they built one of the best houses in the whole metropolitan area - a big two storey place - which was built about 1833 - and is still existing now. George went back to France and saw how they produced table grapes and brought the Johannes Grape from Spain and the Spanish used to export Johannes Grapes in Barrels around the world, so what he did was he found out how they did it. He brought the cuttings back and he was going to export table grapes, but a big problem came in that the Johannes Vine is sterile and you need another variety to pollenise it, and my father went over to France and found out how they pollenated them from other varieties, because they never knew before this.

What happened was with my granfather's expertise, and my father did a lot of work too, that we ended up with the largest table grape vineyard in the southern hemisphere. We had 150 acres of table grapes and also the largest trellis in the world, which was famous. Because of the table grapes, and he also grew lucerne which he sold to the polo pony players from India, but when he grew table grapes, the government got very interested in exports, because the country was very short of money, like now...

Life goes through cycles - 1840 depression, 1930 depression, 1890 as well and now 1990's - as we go through a depression, we gradually sort ourselves out. But after the 1930 one it wasn't really until 2nd world war that everything sorted itself out.

Prior to the table grape era (about 1916) the convicts used to come up from the Swan. They didn't come here until about 1850 to 1868 they were in this state, so that they used to be stationed at Guildford and they came up and on the property here, there was an old pit (it still exists) where they used to get out ironstone. They used to put wedges into the rock and wet them and the ironstone would break off and they would smash it. In those days you only had horse and drays and they built a

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big causeway on the bridge in front of our house here. But no-one is quite sure when it was built. They believe about the convict era in 1850, but then there is reports that that bridge was re-built around about 1896. As a boy we always used it to come across in the cars. All that area that is built up, was built up by the convicts and as you can imagine, it was pretty long. Their problem was, in the early days, you couldn't have steep hills because of ... and they didn't have machinery, like bulldozers and things, to make the gradients less, so what the Engineers tried to do was look for an area, as you can see there it is very easy to come down beside a creek and go up on the other side where the flattest area was. So obviously, this was one of the best areas, but the problem is that the flats were pretty muddy, so they put ironstone down there, so the wagons could get through.

In those early days there were engineers and one would have built the bridge and obviously they brought people out from England who had built bridges there.

The purpose of the bridge - the early settlers couldn't get over the Swan River, so what they did was they went around it. So that is why this bridge was built originally - to go around the river. They came from Perth, through here and then they got to where Upper Swan is and then there was another bridge built there, so then went south again and headed up through the hills to York and Beverley.

Cruises Mill - I'm not sure how that worked. One reason why they established here was of water. In the early days it was extremely difficult carting water and here there was a lot of potable water so that it was ideal to have a flour mill and people were passing with wheat from York and Beverley. The big problem on the Swan Valley was that the river flats was the only area where they could grow wheat in the early days, because of lack of phosphates. The sand was so poor that nothing would grow on it. The sand was easy to clear, but useless to grow anything on it.

The problem was with the river flats, there were generally large trees on the flats - you know blue gums and the flood gums and each tree took a week or two to get out and then had to be burnt up. They were enormous trees. They used to ringbark the trees, then you would have to dig around the

stump and the burn it out.

The Upper Swan bridge was washed out several times in the early days. Crops on the river flats were totally destroyed with the floods. This is one of the reasons why they went further inland where there was better soil - red soils and up towards Geraldton - but some of the areas at Geraldton - the Georgina Flats had natural phosphates in the soil and the same at Gingin - certain areas have natural phosphates, so you don't have to spread super on those types of soils.

There was a main road north from Upper Swan - the same one as existing - they probably went up to areas like Bindoon and Gingin. They also headed inland to areas like Carnamah, Three Springs and Mingenew...As the soil got better towards the coast, then they headed towards Dongara and the main road still follows that area.

The road leading away from here was the main road to Perth. The other road just went straight past here - due east - west and that headed up to Upper Swan from here and the other way it headed it headed towards Perth. Where the old track goes, I have no idea. Perth has developed very quickly. We had a beach house at Trigg and my parents used to go under the Mt Lawley Subway to get to Trigg, well now you can virtually go direct through Gnangara Road. Most of the roads in the state depended on - like Kalgoorlie with minerals, Norseman, Leonora and the same through Paynes Find, Cue and Mt Magnet and Meekatharra - they followed the gold in the early days, then the railways also followed along these early tracks.

People who lived in this area when this bridge was built were Judge Mackie (he was the first Judge in the state - he owned the land here), George Fletcher Moore was a solicitor - he used to ride a horse into Perth from here. In the old days there was plenty of time - they used to get up at daylight and because there was no electricity go to bed when the sun set. They got 12 hours in a day. Lifestyles have changed a lot -one of the major problems with these early settlers was food- I remember my father saying how they used to go out and hunt kangaroos with kangaroo dogs...

One time he went out shooting kangaroos and he was getting over a fence and the dog put his foot on the trigger and shot him in the leg.

When I was a boy, when the first rains came, Ellen Brook has always had plenty of Cobblers in there and also there used to be a lot of Perch and Carp. There is still a few in the brook at the moment. There was a grey tiddler with scales on it - the cobblers we used to catch with a worm and then skin them and soak them in salt water overnight and have them for breakfast with egg and breadcrumbs. People used to have bacon, kidneys, lamb fry, heart, brains for breakfast when I was a boy....We used to listened to the radio.

We had an old weatherboard house, with a kerosene fridge, my mother had an old Simpson washing machine, a Coolgardie safe. Prior to 1948 we used all horses in the vineyard and we had 40 draught horses. We used to grow all our own hay - we used to cut with a binder then it was chopped up into chaff. We had an old steam engine here which dates back to my Grandfathers time when he used to grow lucerne, he ran water from a dam we had up into the vineyard and they had what they call fluming which was metal which they ran the water along and flood irrigated all the lucerne. They also cut chaff and wood with the steam engine.

My uncle had one of the first steam cars in the state. Also we used to have this old Vauxhall 25 which once, just before we got across the West Swan Bridge, the wheel fell off it. During the war you couldn't buy a car - then in the 1950's when we had a wool boom, then we bought an only Plymouth. We sold this old Vauxhall 25 for 400 pounds and that was what we had paid for it.

The bridge down near the Ellen Brook Bridge stopped being a public bridge long before my time - my grandfather bought the property in 1897 and as far as I know the mill may have been working then, I don't know that it was. He stored some of his wine in there then it got burned down. Originally they used horses to drive it, then a mill race was built from the dam and water would run down and that turned the wheel.

Once the people stopped coming to use Cruises Mill there wasn't a lot of public traffic through there.

The Government built a bridge on West Swan Road over Ellen Brook about 1916 and it took all the need for this bridge away. West Swan Road was a fairly major road in those days. The road that came through the sand towards Perth really serviced no-one - there were no farms on that track. It

can only be used as a walk bridge now. When we did our sub-division in 1988, we spent \$25,000 doing it up. That was a condition that the Shire put on us for the sub-division. Not many people know its here.

The little bridge is built very strongly. A lot of water can get underneath it. It is quite long about 180' long - the major problem is the wood tends to rot with the rain, etc also when we drive over it with a car it use to have 12" hew banks through the timber, which nailed to top deck on, and as you drove over it the whole bridge rattled and these hew banks would keep falling out and then the planks would sort of move to one side and over a period of time they fell to bits..During my childhood, those planks had probably come down half the thickness they originally were. A lot of the main bearers had broken too. They were about 18'6" long - as I got over I spent a lot of time trying to repair it.

They built a new bridge over Ellen Brook at West Swan and we used a lot of that timber as decking on top of the bridge which had quite a bit of bitumen and blue metal on the top. Over the years we have spent a lot of money fixing it up. A couple of major problems we had were when we built a couple of houses here in 1970 a concrete truck went through the bridge. We had to bring 16 loads of concrete across - we made sure they were about half full each load and the truck would be turning the bins on the back and the weight would jump from one side to the other then it broke one of the bearers and what we did was put a bit of timber across there. We only needed a quarter of a load to finish.

Then when we built my house in 1970 we came around the back way though the bush and I had to use a bulldozer to pull the cement trucks through.

When we did our subdivision up here we tried to get Mt Lawley Estates and Doug Kendall and Metro Industries at the time to go in a subdivision with us. Both Doug Kendall and Mt Lawley Estates said they didn't want to sell their land or subdivide. Metro Industries went in with us. It took us 9 years to get the subdivision, so after the 7th year they reckoned it had been going too long and didn't want to put any more money into it. We kept on and eventually got it through. The State Planning Commission (DPUD now) they told the Swan Shire they'd have to pass it, because they knew that we'd

win the Appeal, so we got our sub-division through then. That was about 1988 - it was passed about 1986-87.

Then as quick as we put the roads through, next thing we see behind us is the great bulldozers and machines working and that's the first we knew about Sanwa Vines coming in. Obviously they got there's straight through, whereas we had to wait 9 years, which we felt very disappointed with. We had spend 1.4 million on roads and bridges and they just hopped in and used it all, same with the electricity we had brought in - they just tapped in off the end of it. It had cost us \$28,000 to bring the electricity in. The bridge cost approximately....John Ewing actually designed it and we sent it to the Shire and they gave it to the Main Roads Department who said it wasn't big enough. We thought it strange for only 36 lots, what happened was they made us make the roads wider, bigger and stronger, which we didn't know - it was obviously for the Vines Country Club - it cost us well over \$300,000 to build the bridge.

The bridge was originally designed for 400 cars a day, now there is approximately 2,200 cars a day going to the Sanwa Vines Complex. The last accident on the Bridge was after they had the Vines Classic, was a furniture hire truck that the driver blamed the wind - he hit the edge of the bridge and ended up backwards on the fence on the other side ... One of the major problems there is the traffic - they all tend to speed - lots of very fancy cars drive up there at top speed - also big cement trucks, semi-trailer loads of bricks and when they first started scrapers, bulldozers using the bridge and it made the road sink on each side of the bridge. Vehicles sink into the hotmix. It just squashes out like putty with very heavy traffic.

What it interesting with the bridge is when they built it. The old style bridge was all made out of timber, bearers, etc. This new bridge - they put the piles in, checked the ground first and its all worked out by the Engineers how deep they need to drive the piles in. They use air to drive the piles in now - once the piles are in and level they put a steel frame underneath and put scaffolding underneath to hold the framework up, they put like 6" ply wood over the decking and put metal on that and fill it all with concrete. So the concrete is actually sitting on top of the piles. The whole decking has to be done in one day - it's made out of concrete. The Main Roads actually did the work

on it. We got prices from Private Contractors and they were all about the same. When they did the concrete it was all a bit up and down on top, then they put tar and metal on top.

Last accident a big sand truck with a crane fell over and blocked the whole bridge. Another chap came around the corner a bit fast and went into the end of the bridge. A car rolled over on the end of the bridge.

Upper Swan Bridge - when they were doing the Upper Swan Bridge a cattle truck rolled over when he had to go down to West Swan Road.

West Swan Bridge - During the war they came down from Pearce there was an accident involving the Airforce - about 7 people killed. A truck was coming in the opposite direction, he jumped out and his truck went over the side of the bridge as well.

Going back to my school days, there was one of these 1930 Chevys with the wooden wheels and I remember him boring down near the West Swan School (now Montessori School) and the thing got wheel wobble and came down the hill and finally it rolled over and one chap got a broken arm. There were two men in the back of this ute and two in the front.

When I was a lad, there were still some old block roads, made with the old round wooden blocks, out at North Beach and even in St George's Terrace you could see these square blocks that looked like bricks, made out of wood they used for the roads, then they would put tar on them.

West Swan Road was built using big rocks about 12" across on the edges of the roads, so that as soon as you went on the edge, your teeth would nearly drop out, so people soon got back on the road again, but these days they have gravel on the edge and a lot of the trucks run along the edge and the roads get very badly damaged, the bitumen seems to get ripped up. This is a problem here on Millhouse Road as well.

I was born in 1940. At that time they exported 22,000 cases of Johannes to England (before the war). My father used to live pretty well. He used to play polo all the time and drive around the country - he had one of the biggest cars in the state, I think. I don't think he did a lot of work. We used to have 30 polo ponies in our paddock here and there was always heaps of horses,

prior to 1948. 1948 was when we bought our first tractor, it was an old 44K Massey-Ferguson Rowcrop and we bought a 24K Massey and then a bit later a T20 Ferguson, which was a little, light Kerosene one. Prior to that all the tractors were really petrol. The tractors since then have altered to diesel. It took about 3 months to plough the vineyard with draught horses and the cuttings went into a big tank like urn and they used to burn them as they were pruning. All the ash dropped on the ground and then in about the 1950's we used to have this big rake and rake up all the cuttings into a heap and then tow them out with the tractor and have an enormous fire. We used to burn them all the time. Then after that about 1956 we started disking all the cuttings up, using a scalloped disk.

During the picking season, we used to employ about 120 women cleaning grapes and probably about 20 men. The men would pick the grapes and bring them in. All the table grapes would be picked and have hessian over them to keep them cool. Then the women would clean all the bad berries off and then were packed in cases that had brown paper in the bottom with granulated cork and a bit of potassium metabisulphide that would stop any bacteria, etc. Then covered with brown paper and lid nailed on the grapes and they would last up to 6 months without refrigeration. People who worked on the farm, lived on the farm. We had old humpies (single men's quarters) and then we had four married couples who lived in the old house. There were about 10 who lived in the humpies and 4 who lived in the old house. This was prior to subdivision.

After that we had about 5 permanent staff and the rest casual labour in the picking season.

Aboriginals used to camp around the Upper Swan Bridge and they also used to camp in the trees around here.

Traditionally, a lot of the Aborigines who were employed in the vineyards, came down from Moora and those areas. Any they preferred to camp outside and they used to borrow rabbit traps from me and catch possums and things.

The trellis was over a mile long, in the middle of the vineyard. It was the largest and probably the longest in the world. It was half a mile in one direction and half a mile the other and it crossed

itself. It came through where Burgess Crescent is at the moment to where our boundary is. It was a large trellis for grape growing, but it wasn't really viable. It was pulled out when the place was subdivided in 1954.

Barkers Bridge. My aunt used to live in Guildford right next to Barkers Bridge - she told me that when they were building the bridge they used to have a big diesel motor with a wire cable and that went up to a wheel and on the bottom of the cable was an enormous weight and what they used to do was winch this weight up and drop it on top of the piles. There were no big cranes or anything. They had to crowbar the piles forward to get them into the water and they would line them up with this pile driver and one chap was working there and got killed. A log fell on him. This was in the 1950's I think.

There was another incident on the bridge. There was a young lass in a Mini and we had a very heavy frost and there was ice all over Barkers Bridge the bridge was very rough on the deck and she went over a bump and did a complete turn around, because she skidded on the ice. She was very shaken.

Another incident - going back to Edward Pommeroy's son and he was riding a horse across the bridge (not the present one) and he got thrown from the horse and was killed.