

# The War and the Home Front

Marie Frances Box 1891-1973

Horace Leopold Hurley 1891- 1927

## Marie's early years - Windsor and Prahran

Marie Frances Box was born on February 28<sup>th</sup> 1891 at 31 Eastbourne Street, Windsor. She was the first child of **Frances Annie (nee Blunden)** and **Ernest George Henry Box**. On Marie's birth certificate Mrs E Box is recorded as 'in attendance'. This was probably her grandmother **Eliza Box**. In 1893 Marie's sister Edith Emmeline was born at 483 High Street, Prahran, again Mrs E Box in attendance. In 1896 their brother Leonard Ernest was born and in 1904 their sister Alice Lillian (Lilsie) was born, both at 34 Mackay Street, Prahran.

Marie's mother Frances was a dressmaker and so the children were always well dressed. Marie remembers hearing her mother sewing all night to make sure they had good clothes. According to Marie her mother did not display affection and did not indulge in jokes or humour (Lilsie disagreed, she thought her mother had a good sense of humour). Frances was very particular about the way the girls dressed for special occasions and would oversee this very strictly, constantly reminding them to keep clean! Marie and her siblings attended the Hawksburn State School in Malvern Road. On Sundays after church they would take the punt across the Yarra and back as a social outing.

Marie's father, Ernest was a painter and decorator and on Edith's birth certificate he is described as a 'fancy goods dealer'. According to Lilsie he was often working away and she doesn't remember him being around much. In 1913 when Marie was 22 he died at the Alfred Hospital after suffering abdominal cancer. He was 45 years old.



Marie Frances Box  
c1914. Source: family  
collection

Before marrying, Marie worked as a blouse maker at Read's in Prahran (now Prahran Central shopping centre) on the corner of Chapel Street and Commercial Road. According to Lilsie, she also had worked at the Colosseum store in Chapel Street with her sisters. By her early twenties Marie and her family were living at 72 Clark Street

Prahran. During this time, she met Horace Leopold Hurley who worked as a clerk for the Department of Defence.

### Son of a school teacher

**Horace Leopold Hurley (Leo)** was the third of seven children of **Mary Elizabeth (nee Scholes)** and **Thomas Hurley**, a teacher and later a Senior Inspector of Schools. Leo was born on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1891 in the Victorian country town of Greta, one of the many Victorian country towns where his father was a teacher. Two of Leo's brothers, Thomas Ernest Victor (Vic) and Leslie Everton (Les) became prominent medical men. Leo's other brother John Cromwell was killed on the World War I battlefield in Bullecourt, France in 1917. He worked as an insurance clerk before the war. He left a widow and two children.

Leo had three younger sisters, two attended the Methodist Ladies' College in Kew, Melbourne. Florence Mabel (Flossie) married medical practitioner Keith Stephenson and Myrtle Elizabeth trained in home nursing and did secretarial work before marrying William (Bill) Williams. Leo's youngest sister Dorothy Mary attended Ballarat High School, and later worked in administration for the Commonwealth Bank.



Horace Leopold Hurley when a student at Wesley College c1906 (left) and a few years later possibly c1912 (right). Source: family collection

Like his brothers, Leo attended Wesley College at Punt Road Prahran from 1905 when he won a scholarship. He achieved his Merit Certificate (completion of Year 8), was awarded a State School Scholarship and completed the Junior Public Examination for Melbourne University. By 1907, at the age of 16, Leo began working for the Department of Defence as a clerk in the Ordnance Section and by 1913 he was a Warrant Officer in that section. By this time Leo's parents had moved to Ballarat, Leo remaining in Melbourne living at Closeburn Avenue, East Prahran, with his brother Crom.

### Marriage, then off to war

Where and when Marie met Leo is unknown. There is a photo of them together as part of a 'house party' at the *Belle Vue Guest House* in Sassafra, dated Xmas 1913, a year before they married. Marie and Leo married on November 28<sup>th</sup> 1914 at Mt. Erica Methodist Church on High Street Prahran. Marie made her own wedding outfit of a lilac



colour and wore embroidered shoes. On November 26<sup>th</sup> 1915 their first child Gwyneth Marie (Gwen) was born in Armadale and they were living at 2 Cassell Street Hawksburn.

A few months later, in January 1916 at the age of 24, Leo applied for a commission in the Australian Military Forces. Perhaps he was keen to join his brothers who had enlisted earlier and were already serving overseas. Another factor may have been that the Defence Department where he worked was undergoing enormous pressure coping with the demands of the war. At the outbreak of the war, it was a tiny department of about 29 staff mainly housed in the Victoria Barracks on St Kilda Road Melbourne, where Leo worked, and it was described as cramped, informally run, with poor security. As the war progressed, the department was overwhelmed with work and as a result had to greatly increase its staff between 1914 and 1916 (mostly with unsuitably qualified personnel due to the vast numbers leaving for the war) and causing the offices to be extremely overcrowded. The department was described in the press as being one of 'maladministration, corruption and ineptitude'<sup>1</sup>. The Ordnance Department, for which Leo worked, was particularly

singled out. Leo may have seen his opportunity to escape this chaos when in 1916 the AIF established headquarters in Horseferry Road, London.



Marie and Leo's wedding day 1914 - Marie made her own outfit. Source: family collection



### Army Ordnance Corps in London

By February 19<sup>th</sup> 1917 Leo was accepted into the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) and three days later their second child John Victor Leopold (Jack) was born. By September Leo was enlisted as a Warrant Officer in the Army Ordnance Corps (AAOC). His medical form states he was 25 years and 9 months of age, 5' 7 3/4" (approx. 176 cms) tall, and weighed 126 lbs (approx. 57 kilos). He had black hair, brown eyes and a 'medium' complexion with moles on his shoulders. His religion was given as Methodist.

An AIF portrait sent to Marie from Leo. Source: family collection

On November 9<sup>th</sup> 1917 Leo left Australia on the army transport ship *Port Sydney*, stopped for a few days at Suez and Alexandria in Egypt, Taranto in southern Italy, and had arrived in Southampton by January 4<sup>th</sup>. Then, on to Heytesbury in Wiltshire and finally to London. This journey had also taken him briefly via Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and France, and since arrival in England he also had a week in Scotland. Meanwhile Marie was raising two young children at 2 Cassell Street Hawksburn.



Marie with Gwen and nursing baby Jack, possibly taken at Cassell Street Hawksburn, 1917.  
Source: family collection

Leo worked as a Military Staff Clerk in the Ordnance Corps at AIF Headquarters in Horseferry Road London. These officers were often criticised for what some considered was avoiding active service, and they were lampooned in songs such as *Blank Fire*:

*BLANK FIRE* by Lieutenant W. T. Barnes<sup>2</sup>

I landed in London and straight away rode  
Direct to Headquarters in Horseferry Road;  
A bucksheesh Lance Corporal said, "Pardon me, please,  
You have dust on your tunic and dirt on your knees,  
You look such a sight that people will laugh,  
Said the cold-footed bastard of Horseferry Staff  
"Your hat should be turned up at the side like mine  
Your boots, I might state, are in want of a shine,  
Your puttees are falling away from your calf;  
Said the cold-footed bastard of Horseferry Staff.  
The soldier gave him a murderous glance,  
"Remember I'm just home from the trenches in France,  
Where shrapnel is flying and comforts are few,  
Where the soldiers are dying for bastards like you.  
"You bully the soldier you meet in the street,  
And tell them you suffer from frost-bitten feet,  
While your mates in the trenches fight on behalf  
Of you cold-footed bastards of Horseferry Staff.  
"You speak to a soldier you cold-footed cur.  
What of your Mother, did it ever strike her,  
That her son was a waster and afraid of a strafe,  
Who hangs on to his job at Horseferry Staff."

## Brother 'killed in action'

In February of 1918 he wrote<sup>3</sup> to his father that the work in the Ordnance Corps was dull and he has been trying to get into a fighting unit but has been knocked back three times. He also says the authorities have stated he is to be kept in ordnance but he thinks they overestimate his abilities. He says Australia 'licks the lot' when compared to the places he has visited. He also writes about the recent official notification of his brother Crom being 'killed in action', (in May the previous year in France) finally accepting Crom would not be found alive.

In July Leo was made a Temporary 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant and by October, a Lieutenant working in the Internal Audit Section of the AAOC. His record shows he worked mostly in London at AIF Headquarters in Horseferry Road but also had short periods of duty at the other AIF bases at St. Budeaux Rest Camp in Plymouth and after Armistice Day (Nov. 11 1918) through 1919, he continued working in London as well as at Tidworth and Codford in Wiltshire. The Ordnance Corps had a massive job of supplying the Australian forces with all their requirements from basic daily needs, to medical supplies and ammunition. Accounting for all these materials, equipment, operations and their costs, was a huge responsibility. Ordnance staff were also responsible for demobilising and de-equipping all units at the end of the war, which took months of work, and so Ordnance staff were not able to return to Australia as early as the fighting troops.



Horseferry Road  
London (1915) where  
Leo worked during  
WWI. Source:  
Australian War  
Memorial

Leo was appreciated for his abilities in the office, but his military record indicates he may have had some difficulties managing his personal finances. In June 1919 he and other officers were officially directed to pay money they owed to various tradesmen and businesses before they would be permitted to leave England to return home. Leo had to sign a certificate to testify that he had discharged his debts and that he would accept responsibility for any other debts discovered after he returned home to Australia. In March 1920 Leo was given leave to depart London on the *Zealandic* in the role of 'Sports Officer' and was officially discharged from his military service on June 20<sup>th</sup>.



## Disease and disgrace

But that was the least of his problems. At some point whilst he was overseas, he contracted the venereal disease syphilis. There is a medical record on his Returned Soldier's Routine Form stating 'surgical – finalization'. This may refer to him having treatment following his positive results from a Wassermann test, the standard test for identifying the disease. He was fortunate this was not recorded on his military service form, as was the usual practice, and there is no record of a hospital stay. Men could also have their pay docked for time spent off work when in hospital for V.D. What is not known is exactly where and when he knew he had the problem and what he did about it after his Wassermann test results.

Venereal disease had become a huge problem affecting around 60,000 men in the AIF in WWI. Brothels where diseases spread were visited frequently by troops in Egypt and France, but also the area around Horseferry Road London near the AIF HQ. For officers there were the 'blue light' clubs, where condoms were usually provided and facilities were more sophisticated and cleaner than the 'red light' clubs afforded by the ordinary soldier. However venereal diseases had become so much of a problem that the military authorities in London established several centres where men could get treatment immediately after visiting a prostitute. Information sessions were given to the men and officers of each unit as well as warnings about the dangers of alcohol influencing promiscuity. Free prophylactic kits were offered as well as information cards and the opportunity to buy condoms. In these days before penicillin, men who contracted syphilis would normally have to spend at least a month in hospital undergoing some very unpleasant treatment involving injections of mercury and other drugs.

But this is a curable disease when the correct treatment is given promptly and over several months. In some cases the symptoms of the disease can temporarily disappear but not the underlying infection. For whatever reason, whether he was too embarrassed to openly seek help, or possibly in denial that he had a problem at all, it seems that Leo did not undertake the full treatment at the right times. Very tragically, he did not escape the devastating consequences of this disease. How syphilis affected Marie and her children is not certain. Effects on family members can vary, depending on the stage of the disease when the infection is passed on – miscarried pregnancies are a common outcome.



In 1920, Leo returned to Marie and the children who were now living at 43 Williams Road Windsor with her mother and sisters. About a year later, on September 12<sup>th</sup> 1921, Marie gave birth to their third child William Thomas (Bill) at Armadale.

Back at home with Marie and the children: Gwen, Jack and nursing baby Bill. Leo is in his cricket clothes.  
Source: family collection

During the 1920s Leo was employed as a clerk in the newly formed State Electricity Commission of Victoria, but during this time he became increasingly ill with tuberculosis as a consequence of having syphilis. The family moved to 21 Hobart Road Murrumbeena when Marie gave birth to their fourth child, Robert Leonard (Bob) on April 20<sup>th</sup> 1923.

### **New home on Dandenong Road**

Over the next few years, Leo's health deteriorated further and he was unable to work. Now with a family of four young children, Leo and Marie had to depend on his parents' support. On December 17<sup>th</sup> 1924 Leo's father Thomas Hurley purchased two properties on Dandenong Road Murrumbeena on what is now the northern end of Boyd Park (on land adjoining part of the old Outer Circle railway). One was for Crom's widow and children, and number 714 was for Leo, Marie and their children. It was a modest Edwardian style house with a large garden. The verandah of this house was later enclosed to create a separate room for Leo whose physical and mental condition was rapidly deteriorating.



The house on Dandenong Road, now gone and the land part of Boyd Park Murrumbeena. Source: family collection

### **A sad death**

Leo was becoming frequently delusional and his behaviour unpredictable, and so on August 24<sup>th</sup> 1927, his brothers Vic and Les had him admitted to Mont Park Hospital for the Insane. Syphilis being Leo's primary source of illness was clearly identified, but no occurrence of specific attacks between 1920 and 1927 were noted in his medical record. His hospital record details the physical and mental deterioration he suffered over the next few months – rambling irrational delusions, unsteady gait, slurring speech, absence of reflexes and sluggish pupil reaction were some of the observations. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 1927 he died. The death certificate stated cause of death as 'chronic pulmonary tuberculosis, pneumonia, and disease of the brain'. Leo was 36 years old. He was buried at Springvale Cemetery where his parents were later buried with him.

### **Family secrets**

I only discovered the true cause of Leo's death when I applied for his death certificate and subsequently his medical records from Mont Park. The 'disease of the brain' and certainly the word syphilis, had never been mentioned in my family, nor had Leo's place of death, Mont Park Hospital. My suspicions were also aroused when I saw that the names of his parents, wife and children had been omitted, no doubt to protect the

family's reputation. Although many thousands of soldiers caught venereal diseases overseas during the war, much disgrace was still attached to it, and in Leo's case, being a married man added to the shame.

### **A new baby**

When Leo died Marie was 8 months pregnant with their fifth child, Richard Ernest (Dick) who was born on January 13<sup>th</sup> 1928 in a small private hospital in Emily Street Murrumbidgee. Just prior to the 1930s Depression, this was not a good time to be widowed with five children to support, but Marie was very fortunate that her parents-in-law had provided a roof over their heads.

On August 6<sup>th</sup> 1931 Leo's father Thomas Hurley died, and so on October 20<sup>th</sup> 1932 Marie became the owner of the title to 714 Dandenong Road. Crom's son Jimmy would later inherit the other property when his grandmother Mary died.



The new baby, Richard Ernest (Dick) Hurley at 3 months of age. Source: family collection

### **Family support**

It was here through the Depression years, Marie brought up her five children. But not without the support of her extended family, particularly her bachelor brother Len Box, a handy carpenter and wood moulder who had made her an oval dining table as a wedding present, and a window-box seat when baby Dick was born. He now, with the help of her older boys, built her a garage next to the house, a bungalow in the backyard and renovated the kitchen. Len was also an amateur photographer and it is probably due to him that we have so many photos of the family at this time. The extended Hurley family of course was a great support, especially providing the Dandenong Road property but in small ways as well, occasionally providing some extra money for the family. On Sundays Grandma Hurley in nearby Perth Street would bake then walk across the creek to take the fresh cakes to Marie and the children.

Marie was generous whenever she could be. Many a swagman would knock at the door during the Depression years, and although a stranger at the door made her nervous, she always sent them away with food. Another demonstration of her concern for others was when she gave shelter to a young girl who had run away from a nearby convent. The convent had a reputation of severe treatment of the girls, and when the police came searching for the runaway, Marie kept her hidden from them.

Marie enjoyed using a hammer and nails and particularly loved home decorating (just like her father) and in true Depression years' style, was known to do such things as paint flowers on the carpet to achieve a new look, when buying a new carpet would be out of the question. She also loved gardens and planned the garden at the Dandenong Road house including planting the date palm that is still a feature at the Dandenong

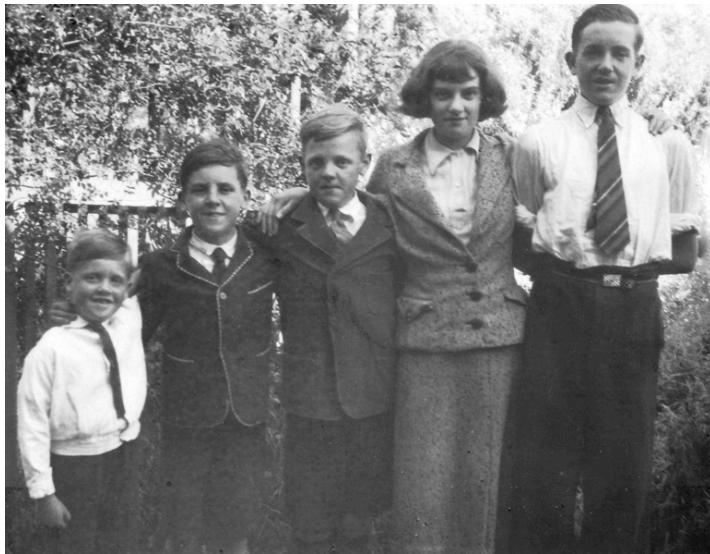


Road end of Boyd Park. In later years this garden was the scene of square dance parties (where son Dick complained of being 'pushed from pillar to bust!').

### **Sports-mad siblings**

Marie and her children were a close-knit family. The Hurley boys all looked up to their sister Gwen and adored their mother. The boys were all very competitive playing sports together and also with close neighbourhood friends the O'Shea family. The famous Boyd family of artists who lived next to their Uncle Les were also playmates with the Hurleys. (Les would let the Boyds use his piano and backyard cricket was often played between the families).

Sports featured strongly in the lives of Marie's children. Gwen, Jack, Bob and Dick played tennis, Bill played rugby and wrestling, Bob and Dick played football for Murrumbeena Amateurs, Gwen played netball and Jack was a table tennis champion at the state level. Jack was also a keen cyclist and went on a cycling holiday around Tasmania with friends - quite a feat in those days. The children were all pupils at Murrumbeena Primary School, and Bill and Bob also went to Spring Road Central School. Jack, Bob and Dick went to Dandenong High School, the closest state secondary school to Murrumbeena at that time. Bill went to Melbourne High School, after turning down a scholarship to Wesley College. The four boys shared the bungalow out the back as their bedroom.



Marie's children: From left, Dick, Bob, Bill, Gwen and Jack.  
Source: family collection

### **Singing and lawn bowls champion**

In the years before World War II (and of course before television) families and singles found entertainment in community singing nights. Marie often sung solo at these evenings at the local bowling club and was known for her lovely mezzo soprano voice. From the late 1930s and in the 1940s Marie found time for playing bowls at the Murrumbeena Bowling Club in Blackwood Street. In 1946/7 she was joint winner of the Victorian Lawn Bowling Association (VLBA) Consolation Pairs with Miss L Hempel. Later in 1957/58 she was the



Marie the champion bowler.  
Source: family collection

Female Club Champion and represented the Murrumbeena Bowling Club in the VLBA Champion of Champions competition, finishing equal third. Her name can be seen on the club's honour boards.



Marie in the front yard of 714 Dandenong Road Murrumbeena. Source: family collection

### **'Pop' Hellwig - Maggie**

At the bowling club Marie met her second husband, a widower Herman Otto Hellwig. He was an instrument maker with the Victorian Railways and had played football for Collingwood in his youth (and he had a son Gordon who played for Fitzroy). He was 16 years her senior and at 65 years of age on August 6<sup>th</sup> 1940, he married Marie, now 49, at the Murrumbeena Methodist Church. Herman was known to the family as Pop Hellwig.



Family and friends in the front garden at Dandenong Road, early 1940s:  
Standing from left: Marie's brother Len Box, nephew Keith Smith, sister Lilsie Smith, son Bob, mother Frances Box, brother-in-law Jim Smith, Marie, friend George O'Shea, and 'Pop' Hellwig;  
Front from left: son Dick and friend Frank O'Shea.  
Source: family collection

### **Three sons go to war**

Three of Marie's children saw active service during WWII. In November 1939 eldest son Jack enlisted in the Australian Infantry Forces and in January 1943 enlisted in the RAAF serving in the Middle East. Bill enlisted in the AIF in October 1941, and Bob joined the Citizen Military Forces in July 1942 before joining the AIF in September. Bill and Bob served together in New Guinea. Dick was too young to join. He helped Bill and Bob build an air raid shelter in the back yard. Marie's sons all survived the war. Jack was discharged in October 1945, Bob in November that year and Bill in January 1946.

## Marriages and careers

All Marie's children were successful in their chosen careers and marriages. Gwen went to business-college and worked in administration for Dent's Gloves until she married in 1941. She was also a talented craftswoman like her mother and made beautiful beaded jewellery. Jack worked for National Mutual Insurance and married in 1944; Bill became a builder and bus-driver and married in 1944; Bob worked for T & G Insurance and married in 1949 (he and his wife living at the Dandenong Road house temporarily); and Dick worked for the State Electricity Commission and married in 1952. All of them in adulthood continued their love of sports including, tennis, lawn bowls and golf. Jack also enjoyed painting, Bill and Gwen were both very musical and were self-taught pianists and Dick was also musical and had a lovely tenor voice.



Above: Gwen sitting opposite the young palm in the front garden of 714 Dandenong Road Murrumbeena 1930s. Source: family collection. Right: Dick at the same palm tree in 2000, where Marie's ashes were scattered in 2006. Photo: Ann Hurley 2000



## That handy bungalow

This era saw many changes for Marie. The bungalow at the Dandenong Road house was remodeled into two rooms: a bedroom and a kitchen/sitting room, and this provided a first home for Bill and his wife and later Bob and his wife, before moving into their own homes. In May 1952 when youngest son Dick married, he and his wife lived at the Dandenong Road house with Marie, firstly in the bungalow and later moving into the house. In June that year Marie's mother Frances Box died, and in August Marie's husband Herman Hellwig died, aged 77. His ashes were buried at Springvale Crematorium.

In the 1950s, to provide extra income, the bungalow was rented out to a couple, Tom and Molly. Marie gained her driver's licence and loved to drive her FJ Holden all the time, particularly to the Dandenong Market. She also drove her daughter-in-law to the doctor with the family cat, thinking it was the veterinary surgery!

Babies were added to the household at Dandenong Road when two grandchildren were born in 1953 and 1958. Between these years son Dick and family were transferred temporarily to Yallourn in Gippsland for his work with the SEC but returned to Murrumbeena in 1957-8. Whilst they were away, Marie shared her house with



Dick's sister-in-law, her husband and new baby. By 1960 the SEC had sent Dick and his family back to Yallourn, and this time Marie went with them. 714 Dandenong Road was sold in 1961 to a sound projectionist, Arthur Dittmer and his wife Lucy.

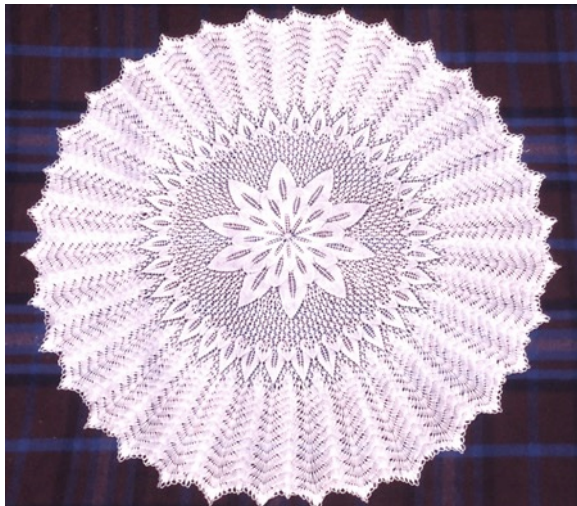


### Living in Yallourn

The family, now Marie, Dick, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren lived at 17 Reservoir Road Yallourn, a new brick veneer home on a hillside street overlooking the town. (Yallourn was demolished in the 1970s, the ground to be dredged for its underlying rich deposits of brown coal.) Marie settled in well and joined the Yallourn Bowling Club. She would play regularly, and at home entertain her fellow bowlers with card afternoons. The ladies would begin the afternoon with a large drop of Masala, followed by sandwiches and biscuits served using her best silver utensils and platters, starched linen and lace table-napkins, tea served in pink floral china and little bowls of sweets distributed around the table.



Left: Marie and friends at one of her card afternoons in Yallourn and (above) at the front of 17 Reservoir Road Yallourn, 1960. Photos: family collection



Some of Marie's amazing crochet work: (left) a tablecloth and (right) a blanket. Source: family collection

### Marie's style, taste and skill

Marie could now afford to furnish and decorate rooms as she wished and one room was reserved as the 'good' lounge room (children not usually allowed) where Marie's very tasteful furniture and ornaments were on display. She had classical taste: soft

furnishings in pastel pinks and greens and Regency stripes, cream woodwork, but windows with very modern pastel coloured Venetian blinds. Various bowling trophies in the form of ornamental plates and vases were displayed on the mantelpiece. A crystal cabinet displayed smaller ornaments and trinkets. Small reproductions of Gainsborough, Reynolds and Dutch masters' paintings were framed on the walls. Her own bedroom was furnished in Queen Anne style, with the bed and dressing table in the same classical colour scheme. Marie loved to crochet and would make many doilies that she would stain a coffee colour and stiffen with sugar then mould into decorative covers for glass vases. She crocheted and knitted rugs, jumpers and socks for all the family. Shopping was also a favourite pastime and Marie particularly enjoyed looking around jewellery shops.

Marie usually cooked for the family and we remember the pressure-cooked vegetables (usually overdone), corned beef and her wonderful slightly burned plum jam made from the blood-plums from the backyard trees. She loved fruit, and bought lots of it, particularly pears and stone fruits. Marie also loved the garden, particularly growing daphne and hydrangeas. One of her favourite activities was the Sunday drives in Dick's new Citroen, to places such as the Strzelecki Ranges, Walhalla, and the Haunted Hills of Gippsland.

In summer months Marie dreaded very hot days and would panic when reading the weather report if the forecast was for high temperatures. She would prepare herself by tearing off the sleeves of her old summer dresses. This seemed uncharacteristic, as she was usually so well groomed and formal in appearance, often wearing hat and gloves when she went out. She would home-perm her hair and tint it a subtle light violet-blue shade.



Some of Marie's children and grandchildren visiting her at Yallourn c1962. Photo: family collection

## Family picnics

Living in Gippsland did not put an end to Marie keeping in touch with her family in Melbourne. Being a close family there were many trips to see all her children, and the tradition of the extended Hurley family picnics developed. Marie was the true matriarch, seated in her picnic chair she would love watching her children and grandchildren playing beach cricket, swimming and water-skiing at beaches such as Dromana, or having barbeques at places such as Healesville. Family would also visit



her at Yallourn, particularly her brother Len who would make the long drive from Melbourne at Christmas and other times to visit his much-loved sister.



One of the many family picnics - this one at Healesville 1960s: From left at front: daughter Gwen, Marie, daughter-in-law Corinne, grandsons David and Stephen, son Jack, son-in-law Alf. At back from left: grandsons Leo and Ronald, son Bill, and unknown girl. Source: family collection

## Return to Melbourne

Late in 1964 Dick was unexpectedly transferred to the SEC's head office in Melbourne. The family had to leave Yallourn and bought a house on Glen Iris Road, in Glen Iris and were settled there by the start of 1965. Marie, now aged 74, was happy to be back closer to the rest of her family. She joined the Camberwell Bowling Club and continued to enjoy her social life and to play bowls until the club told her she couldn't play in the pennant bowls competition – this really upset her.



Family get-together 1980 from left: Jack, Bill, Gwen, Dick and Bob. Source: family collection



## Her last years

By 1970 Marie's health was deteriorating. She was gradually losing her hearing and sight and eventually suffered from dementia. In a nursing home in East Malvern, Marie died on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1973 at the age of 81 years. The cause of death was a sudden 'cerebrovascular accident', and arteriosclerosis from which she had suffered for the past 20 years.

My family called her Mater, and she really was the matriarch of a large family. Marie was survived by her 5 children, her 11 grand children, and at the time of her death 11 great grandchildren. Since then 9 more great-grandchildren have been born and many great-great grandchildren. Her brother Len Box died in 1977 aged 80 and her sister Lilsie (Alice Lillian) Smith died in 2001 aged 96.

## Boyd Park

Marie was cremated at the Springvale Crematorium on January 5<sup>th</sup> 1973 and her ashes were interred under a rose bush in the Cassia Garden. The memorial reads: 'In loving memory, Marie Frances Hellwig, 3.1.1973, age 81, so sadly missed'.

Eventually her sons Bob and Dick agreed they should scatter her ashes under the palm tree she had planted herself, now incorporated into Boyd Park. The scattering was held on March 7<sup>th</sup> 2006. Her son Bob made a speech referring to this location as being the most appropriate final resting place for his mother as it was here at 714 Dandenong Road Murrumbeena where Marie spent the happiest times of her life.



Marie at Dandenong Road  
Murrumbeena c1950  
Source: family collection

End note: In 2014 the ashes of Marie's daughter-in-law Corinne were also scattered under the palm tree, followed by her son Dick's ashes in 2017.

## Ballarat Avenue of Honour

Between 1917 and 1919 the Ballarat Avenue of Honour<sup>4</sup> was planted to commemorate Ballarat citizens who volunteered for active service abroad in World War 1. It was

instigated by one of the directors of the clothing firm E. Lucas & Co., Mrs W. D. 'Tillie' Thompson. The employees, known as 'the Lucas Girls'<sup>15</sup>, planted almost all of the 3,912 trees, of eleven different species, along the avenue for over 22 kilometres. The women's names were recorded with that of each soldier commemorated. The cost of the trees, £2,000, was raised by the employees themselves by activities such as clothing exhibitions, souvenirs and a ladies' football match in 1918 (£320 raised).

As Thomas and Mary Hurley were living in Ballarat at the time, all four of their sons were commemorated. The tree for Leo was an elm tree number 3516 planted on June 9<sup>th</sup> 1919 by Miss A. Ferguson.



Left: Tree number 3516, Ballarat Avenue of Honour. Planted to commemorate Leo by Miss A. Ferguson of E. Lucas and Co. on June 9th 1919.

Left: Detail showing the bronze plaque made in 1934. Photos: Euan McGillivray 2020

Ann Hurley

2020

[hurleyskidmorehistory.com.au](http://hurleyskidmorehistory.com.au)

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Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Andrews, Eric M - 1918: *Defining Victory Managing The War: The Department of Defence 1914-1919* (1998) p3

<sup>2</sup> Australian War Memorial <https://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/1918/soldier/superiors.asp>

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<sup>3</sup> A copy of the original letter is in my family collection.

<sup>4</sup> Ballarat Avenue of Honour [https://honouringouranzacs.com.au/page/avenue\\_of\\_honour](https://honouringouranzacs.com.au/page/avenue_of_honour)  
and [https://bih.federation.edu.au/index.php/Ballarat\\_Avenue\\_of\\_Honour](https://bih.federation.edu.au/index.php/Ballarat_Avenue_of_Honour)

<sup>5</sup> The Lucas Girls <https://www.1wags.org.au/information/featured-stories/arch-of-victory-ballarat/>

#### Other resources:

Anecdotes from Alice Smith, Dick Hurley, Corinne Hurley, Bill Hurley, June Hurley.

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