

James Gilbert Don and Ruby Elizabeth Isobel Milsom

Known to the family as Nan and Pa Don they were married in Goulburn, NSW on 21st October 1916. The couples' families had lived near each other around Heathcote. Pa's family had moved to Goulburn earlier in 1916. The fact that they married in Goulburn is interesting. Nan was 19 and may have been quite independent as she had lost her mother when she was just nine. There may have been more support for her in Goulburn than in her home town of Knowsley.

The family portrait above was taken in Goulburn at the end of 1920 or early 1921. George is the one with long curly hair at the back and Lil is the baby on Nan's lap.

Nan and Pa Don were to live a nomadic life driven by



Pa's search for work. They lived in Goulburn at least until 1920 when their second born child Lillian was born.

In 1922 to 1924 they were back in Victoria in Bendigo. The next two children were born there. The picture was taken in 1924, possibly in Bendigo. The children are from left, Lil, Marge in the pram, George and Norma.

Then in 1927 they were living in West Melbourne; Nan's father was living with them when he died in May. There was added tragedy when her fifth child Valma died in September. She was just nine months old.



James and Ruby Don

Pa must have picked up skills and qualifications to drive and maintain steam engines and dredges.

A photo from 1929 shows the new family car. It is taken at Fairfield. It is thought Pa worked at a hospital there tending the steam boilers that powered the hospital's facilities.

Kooweerup is only 45 metres above sea level and originally almost surrounded by a large area of swamp. From the 1860's private land owners had sporadically tried to drain areas of the swamp. A

government funded scheme began in 1889 to build the Main Drain which stretched for 15km. Work was still sporadic, with many other drains being constructed. In the 1930s, after large floods, further work commenced and Pa began work there at that time. The family lived at the tiny township of

Catani, two more children were born. The children went to school at Catani Primary School.

The family moved from Catani into Kooweerup and that is probably when Lil and Ted met.

When George was twelve, about 1926/30, he had a serious bike accident and the injuries stayed with him for life. At 19, about 1938, he was admitted to Royal Melbourne Hospital where he stayed for four years.



Family at Catani, 1935, from left, Norma, James, Lillian, Ruby, Marjorie

This probably prompted the next move back to Melbourne. Pa got a job on the construction of Appleton Dock which was a shipping terminal built adjoining the Yarra river close to the junction of the Maribyrnong river and the Yarra. The area is called Coode Island and is part of West Melbourne. The Island was created in 1886 when the Harbour Trust shortened the Yarra by digging a new

channel for the river. The old course of the Yarra was progressively filled in and built on. Coode Island is now bordered on three sides by streams, the Maribyrnong, the Yarra and the Moonee Ponds Creek. Pa operated one of the dredges and also



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drove the trains which carted away the spoil from the worksite.

The family lived in a house on Coode Island and the children went to school at the Footscray Primary School in Hyde Street. Jim was a member of the school band. The Hyde Street School Band was famous in Footscray and played at all the Footscray Football team's home games. Pa also played the euphonium in the Hawthorn City Band.



It was some distance from home to school, 3.5 km (2miles) and the children had to walk to and from school. It was an experience coming home from school that may have led to the family's next move. Ruby and her brother Jim were coming home from school one day when a man offered them a lift. Jim accepted right away. Girls in front boys in the back the man said. They started off but Ruby soon became uneasy with the man's conversation. When the car stopped she opened the door and fled. Jim quickly followed. After this incident they both got bikes to travel to and from school on. Soon after this event the family moved off Coode Island to a house at 6 Percy Street Hawthorn. This was sometime between 1938 and 1941.



Nana Don with her daughter Lillian

Pa got another Job at the Power Station at Yarraville which is now the Science Museum. He was one of the engineers who looked after the steam engines that powered the power generators. The family moved again around 1942 to 22 Glenferrie Road Hawthorn. They were living here when Joy was born.

Joy's Aunty Ruby often told the story of being with Joy's father when he rang St Georges Hospital and found out Joy had been born. He rang from a phone box opposite the house and when he came out of the phone box he picked Ruby up and swung her around in celebration.

They stayed at Glenferrie Road for some time. Joy has fond memories of staying there. She had a lot to do with her aunty,

Norma and of course Ruby. Ruby was 14 years older than Joy and always the smart dresser as we always knew her. Joy also has memories of Pa's extensive vegetable garden. There was also an impressive flower garden at the front of the house. Ruby always claimed one of her jobs was to look after that garden.

The family were to move again. This time into Nan and Pa's own home at 8 Chatham Road in Canterbury.



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The circumstances were a dream story. They won the lottery. In those times there was a lottery run by a company called Tattersalls. People bought tickets for 5 shillings in it from the newsagents. Each draw contained 200,000 tickets. After each draw a pink sheet was published with lists of the winning numbers which people had to search to see if their number had come up. Nan and Pa won £2000 which was second prize and they used to buy their own home in Chatham Road. We think it was in the late 1950s that this happened.



Once again Pa established a vegetable garden. By this time all the family were married although George was living with them. He was divorced from his first wife. Eventually George married again and moved to Merimbula, NSW where he had bought the Merimbula Hardware Store which he ran with his wife Lyn.

Pa Don was to die in 1965 after which Nan sold the Chatham Road house and lived with her children Ruby and Jim at different times. After a fall breaking her hip she moved into a nursing home. She passed away in 1985.

Nana and Pa Don's Family

James Gilbert Don, b. 31 Dec 1894 at Heathcote, VIC, d. 12 Aug 1965 at Canterbury, VIC.

+**Ruby Elizabeth Isobel Milsom**, b. 14 Apr 1897 at Tooboorac, VIC, m. 21 Oct 1916 at Goulburn, N.S.W., d. 14 May 1985 at Melbourne, VIC.

— **George Thomas Don**, b. 6 May 1917 at Goulburn, N.S.W., d. 8 Dec 1984 at Bairnsdale, VIC, Australia

+**Nancy Cathcart**, m. circa 1941 at Hawthorn, VIC, d. 8 Aug 1994

+**Lyn ??Don**, b. circa 1930, m c1970

— **Lillian Isobel Don**, b. 21 Oct 1920 at Goulburn, N.S.W., d. 1 Dec 1989 at Ringwood, VIC, AUS

+**Edwin Robert Standfield**, b. 23 Dec 1917 at Kooweerup, VIC, m. 1 Nov 1941 at Hawthorn, VIC, d. 13 Jan 1981 at Rhyll, VIC.

— **Norma Meryl Don**, b. 26 Sep 1922 at Bendigo, VIC, d. 9 Dec 1995 at Melbourne, VIC.

+**Reginald James Gard**, b. 25 Oct 1905 at Plymouth, DEV, ENG, m. circa 1968 at VIC, d. 13 May 1980 at Rosebud, VIC.

— **Marjorie Lorraine Don**, b. 29 May 1924 at Bendigo, VIC, d. 13 Nov 2010 at Pambula, N.S.W.

+**Len Shaw**, b. 1927, m. 7 Dec 1948 at Hawthorn, VIC.

— **Valma Harriet Don**, b. 9 Feb 1927, d. 26 Sep 1927 at Carlton, VIC.

— **Ruby Elizabeth Don**, b. 17 Oct 1928 at Melbourne, VIC, d. 28 Dec 2017 at Melbourne, VIC.

+**Douglas Monteith**, b. 3 Sep 1927 at Wonthaggi, VIC, AUS, m. 18 Oct 1952 at Hawthorn, VIC, d. 30 Nov 1970 at Box Hill, VIC.

— **James Alfred (Jim) Don**, b. 11 Sep 1930 at Kooweerup, VIC, d. 27 Mar 2003

+**Ramona (Rae) Webb**, b. 6 Oct 1928, m. circa 1950, d. 23 Apr 1996

+**unknown spouse**

— **Leslie William Don**, b. 24 Jun 1935 at Warragul, VIC, d. 11 Mar 1992 at QLD.

+**Claudette Alexis Ryan**, b. 7 Dec 1941 at Traralgon, VIC, AUS, m. 3 Aug 1963 at Hawthorn, VIC.



Ruby Elizabeth Isobel Don nee Milsom (1897-1985)