

Bennett

Alan Roy Bennett

Local historian

b.1934 – d.2000

Published “Settlers to Sandpits -Turnips to Tips”

Lived at 77 Kingston Rd Heatherton

Mary Bennett

Sons Stuart & Steven. Daughter Alanna

Photos:

D002396, 2397, 2398

Docs:

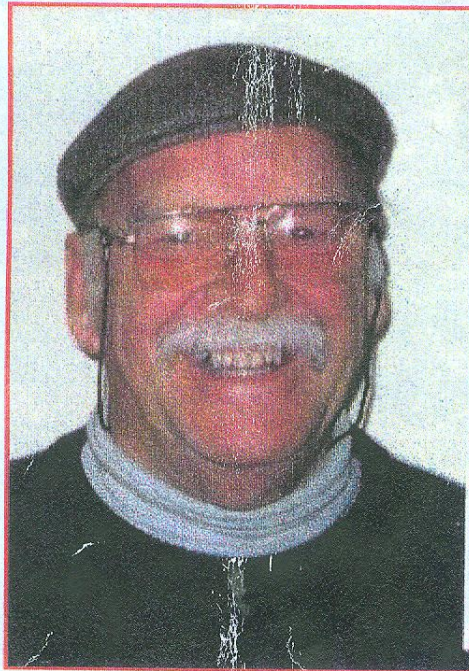
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***The Celebration of
the Life of***

Alan Roy Bennett

(Benny, Jumbo, Big Al)

(23rd January 1934 – 21st April 2000)



*Lives of great men all remind us,
We can make our lives sublime:
And departing, leave behind us,
Footprints in the sands of time.*

"The Scholars Companion History – 1903"

Obituaries

ALAN BENNETT

Big man to friends and the community

Plumber, Scout, ten-pin bowler
Born: January 23, 1934
Died: April 21, 2000

ALAN Bennett, or Big Al, was described as a man with a heart that matched his big frame.

He will be remembered as a mine of information, dogged, determined, a role model, a teacher as well as a stirrer.

Mr Bennett was a respected member of his community, with a friendly nature that endeared him to many.

He was born in Carlton in 1934, an only child.

He spent his youth in and around the northern suburbs of Melbourne, and at his grandparents' home in Healesville.

At the age of 14, Mr Bennett left school and started a plumbing and gas-fitting apprenticeship with J.L. Williams in the city.

He worked at the same company for 24 years, becoming a supervisor in charge of plumbing and air-conditioning for many of Melbourne's largest buildings.

From J.L. Williams, Mr Bennett moved to the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works (now Melbourne Water) as a drainage inspector, then trade-waste officer, and ended as special projects officer.

He worked also with a special response team, whose services were required at the Coope Island disaster.

He also



Alan Bennett

monitoring system to stop companies dumping noxious chemicals into the sewers.

Mr Bennett retired in 1994 after 20 years with the MMBW.

In 1964, while working at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, Mr Bennett met Mary, a student nurse.

They married in 1966, and settled in Heatherton where they had three children.

In his spare time, Mr Bennett loved ten-pin bowling, and became one of Australia's top bowlers.

He also taught many up-and-coming players, some of whom excelled at the sport.

He also found time for a range of worthy causes.

He was a member of the Heatherton primary school committee, and was involved closely in the

That involvement began with the 1st Cheltenham scouts. He became district scout leader, then district commissioner for the City of Moorabbin, then district commissioner of Glen Eira.

He was awarded the medal of merit in 1989, and the bar to the medal of merit in 1996, for services to the movement.

Twenty years' involvement with the scouts was acknowledged with another award in 1999.

Mr Bennett was a self-trained historian — he belonged to the Mordialloc Genealogy Group and the Dingley Historical Society — and when he retired in 1994, he researched and completed a 127-page work on the history of scouting in the Moorabbin area.

This was followed by a further work covering Heatherton, Dingley, Clarinda and South Oakleigh.

Mr Bennett's love of history also led him to research his own family background, through which he made many Internet contacts with lost relatives in England.

His other interests included being a Masonic past-master, a collector and an auctioneer, and a volunteer at the local community radio station.

Mr Bennett will be remembered as a dedicated citizen and popular identity of Heatherton.

He is survived by his wife, three children and four grandchildren.

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The rise and rise of Kingston

JUST after the demise of the City of Moorabbin at the end of 1994, Heather-ton man Alan Bennett called the new City of Kingston council offices about a drainage problem outside his house.

Curious about the name "Kingston", Mr Bennett casually inquired as to its origins.

"That's easy," came the reply. "It comes from the Kingston Centre, of course."

Suspicious that there was "probably more to it than that", the retired former Board of Works (now Melbourne Water) special projects officer began looking into the matter.

Three years later, he is nearing completion of his history of the Heather-ton, Dingley, Clarinda and South Oakleigh areas, to be titled *Settlers to Sand Pits, Turnips to Tips — Windert to Kingston 1841-1998*.

During that time he "haunted" local libraries, and municipal and government offices, poring through old records, diaries, letters, newspapers, as well as birth and death notices, survey maps, minute books, school enrolments and old photos.

He also uses the Internet: "There's nothing you can't get if you really want it."

A plumber by trade, Mr Bennett is a self-trained historian and writer. On his retirement four years ago he researched and completed a 127-page work on the history



On the case: Alan Bennett has enjoyed unearthing the area's colorful past. Picture: SIMON HOEY 9712035SH104

of Scouting in the Moorabbin area.

"I love researching maps and archives, and asking questions ... it keeps me occupied, keeps the brain rolling over," he said. Mr Bennett, who has lived in Heather-ton with wife Mary for 31 years, found that in the early 1840s what is now Heather-ton lay in the heart of a 40,000-acre squatters run leased by Irishman John O'Shannassy, who was later to become Premier of Victoria on three occasions.

After building the homestead *Windert* on the land, O'Shannassy passed the lease on to brothers John and Richard King, who renamed the property *Kingslands*.

Later that century the area became known as Kingstown (and parts of it Queenstown), then Kingston, and finally Heather-ton, Dingley, Clarinda and South Oakleigh, which all now come under the umbrella of the City of Kingston.

Mr Bennett is keen to hear from anyone who may have any old photos or documents from the area so that he can copy them.

He is interested in hearing from anyone wanting to contribute anecdotes about the area or the families who lived there, to include in a "contributors" chapter. He can be contacted on 9551 2326. He hopes to have the book finished by the middle of next year. — MARK FREEMAN

Timeless worker was mentor and friend

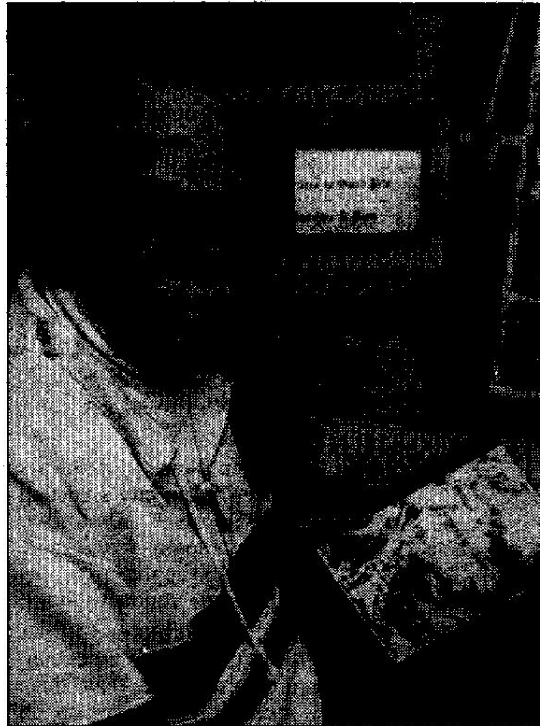
OBITUARY

MORE than 300 mourners packed the WD Rose offices in Charman Rd on April 28 to pay their respects to Heatherton's Alan Bennett.

They heard of Mr Bennett the environmental activist, scout leader, masonic leader, historian, writer, plumber, village committee member, mate, husband, father and family man.

Mr Bennett - Benny, Jumbo or Big Al to most who knew him - was described during the service as having a heart to match his frame, a mine of information, dogged, determined, fair dinkum, a stirrer, a role model, a teacher, mentor and a tremendous friend.

A plumber who ended his working life at the head of works as a safety officer,



Sadly missed: Alan Bennett.

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Mr Bennett was also a self-trained historian and writer.

On his retirement in the early 1990s he researched and completed a 127-page work on the

history of scouting in the Moorabbin area. Scouting was always one of his passions, his friends told the gathering. He served for 22 years in the movement, including a

stint as district commissioner. He had lived in Heatherton for more than 30 years, then put together a 131-page history of the Heatherton, Dingley, Clarinda and South Oakleigh areas called *Settlers to Sand Pits, Turnips to Tips, Windert to Kingston, 1841 to 1998*.

On its release last year Mr Bennett told the *Standard* his next project would cover the history of pubs in Melbourne from 1855.

He said he was looking forward to researching it.

"I've got a soft spot for pubs," he said.

Mr Bennett died on Good Friday of a heart attack after battling illness for some time.

He was 66.

He is survived by his wife, ~~MARY~~ Stuart and ~~three~~ daughter Anne.

— MARK STEWART