

**A profile of my pioneering Petty family
Doncaster 1850s**

My G. Grandfather's Sister, Eliza Clay married Thomas "Tom" Petty in 1873

Lynton Clay

2026

Thomas “Tom” & Eliza Petty



Thomas Petty snr

Thomas Petty (snr) came to Australia in Aug 1853 to establish a new life for his family, purchasing 47 acres of bush land along Koonung creek in west Doncaster. Five years later, he wrote to his wife asking her to come out and bring the family to a two-storey house he had built on this land. Jane Petty (Thompson) with her children, **Thomas aged 13**, George 8, and John 6, left Liverpool on the ship “Red Jacket” on 20th July 1858 and arrived in Melbourne on 13th October. (Elizabeth 11, stayed in England – Later came on the “Red Jacket” in Nov 1866)



Jane Thompson

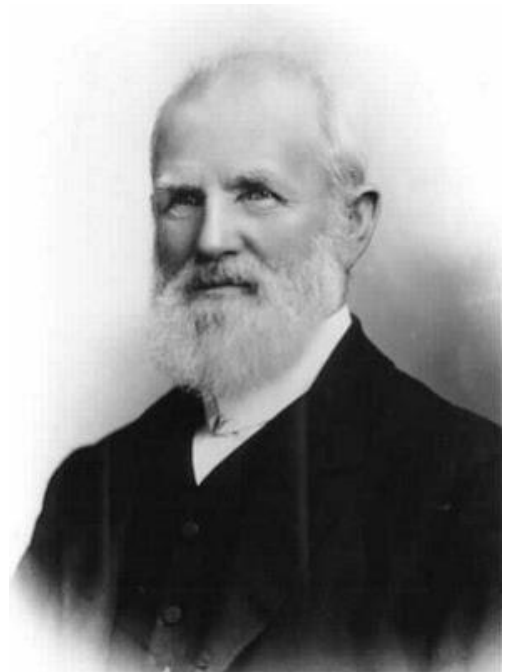
Young Tom Petty was born in 1845 in Yorkshire, where his father Thomas and his uncle were part owners of a cotton mill in the Bradford area. During the 1850s, an industrial slump left them with little work. Thomas’ eyesight was failing, and the doctor ordered a sea voyage. Thomas left his wife and children in England, sailing for Australia to find land and make a home for his family in Victoria.

A young Thomas under the guidance of his father soon developed as a respected fruit-grower and leading community member in Doncaster.

Tom Petty was the most enthusiastic, dynamic and productive “Fruit Grower” in the Doncaster Templestowe area. Throughout his life, he constantly opened up new land or bought existing orchards, developing new equipment and methods to help orchardists.

Tom developed his life as a successful fruit grower, soon becoming prosperous and invested in land. In 1883, the “Leader”, a weekly newspaper, organised a competition for the best fruit garden in the Melbourne district and offered a silver cup for the winner. In the following years, four Doncaster Fruit Growers won the cup among them Tom Petty. In the 1870s, when some ships were equipped with ice making machinery, Tom with Richard Serpell and Fred Thiele sent a trial consignment of pears to England. In the 1890s, there was more refrigeration machinery being installed in ships. Tom experimented with keeping cherries in a cool store. He found that they would keep long enough to travel to England, regular exports of fruit then began.

Over time Tom had become a respected member of the community and was first elected councillor to the Shire of Bulleen in 1877. The next year, the councillors made him Shire President. He remained in council for the next twelve years.



At the top of the hill in Doncaster Road, Alfred Hummel, who led the life of a wealthy gentleman, had built a large, attractive house called "Bay View", but in the 1880s Hummel left the district. Tom and Eliza seized the opportunity to move into "Bay View", a home more in keeping with their elevated social status. It also gave more room for their growing family. To Eliza, it was like coming home; she now lived alongside her family, the Clays.

At harvest time, he sent fruit to a cool store in Fitzroy and to Sennitts at South Melbourne. He knew that a local cool store, run at the right temperature for fruit, would be a great asset to the local orchardists. Tom persuaded the Fruit-growers Association to petition the Premier, Thomas Bent, to build a cool store in Doncaster.

In 1902, Tom Petty commenced his largest project. He obtained a loan of £8,000 from the bank, and then he and his wife, Eliza, purchased 559 acres of land in the South Warrandyte area, known as "The Park".

One of the most onerous tasks in an orchard was spraying with a hand-operated spray pump. Tom thought that a pump could be worked by a motor, so he asked his nephew, Jack Russell, if he could construct a motor-driven spray pump. At a meeting of the Fruit Growers Association, he told the story of spraying fruit trees for orchard pests, which led to the development of the Russell Spray pump.

John Russell built this machine. It was the first satisfactory power sprayer in Australia. He called it the "Bave U" after the name of Tom Petty's home. For the next forty years, fruit-growers throughout the country used Russell's spray pumps.

Tom Petty had packed many activities into his active life. In his time, Tom Petty had purchased or planted twenty-one different orchards, always leaving the area better than he found it.

He achieved a lot in his lifetime...

- He was an active and life member of the fruit-growers association.
- He with Richard Serpell and Fred Thiele sent a trial consignment of pears to England in the 1870s', establishing the export of fruit to England.
- In 1883, the "Leader", a weekly newspaper, organised a competition for the best fruit garden in the Melbourne district and offered a silver cup for the winner. In the following years, four Doncaster Fruit Growers won the cup among them Tom Petty.
- In 1902, Tom Petty commenced his largest project. He obtained a loan of £8,000 from the bank, then, he and his wife Eliza, purchased 559 acres of land in the area of South Warrandyte known as "The Park".
- He persuaded the Fruit growers Association to petition the Premier, Thomas Bent, to build a cool store in Doncaster.
- He was influential in the development of the Russell Spray pump.
- He purchased "Bay View" in the 1880s from Alfred Hummel when he left the district.
- He was the superintendent of the Sunday school in connection with the Church of Christ, Doncaster.
- He was one of the first trustees of the Doncaster Athenaeum.
- President of the newly formed Doncaster Progress Association in 1911.
- He was elected as a councillor of the Bulleen Shire 1877-1889, president 1887/8 (Bulleen become the shire of Templestowe in 1892)
- Shire of Doncaster councillor 1892-1894
- He was the oldest member of the Doncaster I.O.R., being connected with the Order for 50 years,
- In 1913 built a two-storey house "Bingley" on the corner of Whitten's lane.
- Tom Petty Jnr. reportedly owned and established over 30 orchards in the district, making him the most active fruit grower in Doncaster

Eliza Petty (Clay)

Source: Irvine Green assisted by Jean Beavis writing in 1997 06 DTHS Newsletter

Eliza Petty, the daughter of Agnes Clay, was born at picturesque Hall Farm in Devonshire in 1850. The family lived at Fitzroy when they first came to Melbourne, and while there, Eliza attended Collingwood Ladies College. When they moved to Doncaster she went to the school run by Misses Robina and Mary Anne Wilson in their Log Cabin in Wilsons Road. After leaving school Agnes sent Eliza to learn dressmaking in Prahran. She stayed with a friend Mrs Witchell. She learnt merely to make her own dresses nicely, not to sew for others. Probably her wedding dress was the last dress Eliza had time to make for many years, for being the wife of the highly active Tom Petty; she had an extremely busy life. Eliza managed her household and not only cooked for her family and the men, with help of one woman, until her daughter Ethel was old enough to help her.



Eliza Clay born in 1850. Daughter of John and Agnes Clay of Doncaster. in 1873 married Tom Petty.

After Alfred Hummel left the district in the early 1880s, his house, "Bay View," was purchased by Tom and Eliza Petty; Tom had been the young boy who came to Doncaster with his mother, Jane, about thirty years earlier. After her years of life on the orchard at Doncaster, Jane Petty had matured into a beautifully spoken woman who, although small, stood up straight and was always elegantly dressed. Jane had four children, as well as a boy from Thomas' previous marriage, but ten years after coming to the district, they took an eight-year-old girl to look after. The mother of the girl, Isabella Stone, had died, and her father brought her to stay with his friends Thomas and Jane, "To stay for a few months". Time passed, the months became years, and "Bel" stayed on. Her father sometimes wrote, but did not come to take her home until she was about fourteen years old. Thomas and Jane did not want her to go, and "Bel" was happy with them, so she remained with the Pettys. When Isabella Stone grew up, she married Tom Lawford, the brother of Jane Hummel.

In 1877, Thomas Petty (snr) had an accident in his cart and, shortly after, died from his injuries. Jane was now left a widow, and she ran and organised the orchard with the help of her sons to do the heavy work. Jane Petty remained at her home, "Coonung Grange", until her death in 1894.

Tom and Eliza had been living in a house near Jane Petty in Doncaster Road. When they moved to "Bay View", it was like coming home for Eliza. They now live alongside her family, the Clays, where she has lived since the age of eight.

All fruit growers' wives cooked for the men, but Eliza had a particularly onerous task as Tom employed so many men. When the girls were growing up, Eliza engaged two dressmakers who came for several weeks each year and stayed in the house whilst making dresses and sewing for the family.

One of Eliza's helpers, a girl called Sarah, was an ardent follower of the Salvation Army. As she sang hymns from morning till night, she was always known as "Salvation Sarah". One day, Tom Petty arrived home with a load of bricks on the dray. When he was unyoking the horse, he left one chain attached to the hook in the dray shaft. The horse moved out of the shafts, the dray swung sideways, knocking him over, the shaft resting on his neck. He shouted, and Sarah, who was crossing the yard, heard him. She rushed over, held the shaft up enough for him to breathe, and then called for help. A passerby heard her and came to the rescue. Together, they lifted the shaft high enough to release Tom.



"Bayview", the home of Eliza and Tom Petty, built by Alfred Hummel in the 1860's.

The move to "Bay View", as they now called their home, gave more room for the growing Petty family and accommodation for the men Tom Petty employed. Also, Eliza was close to her brother, Richard Clay, but only a few years later, the Clays moved to Kew.

Eliza and Tom missed the Clays, but these were the Land Boom years. Tom, the most dynamic Doncaster fruit grower, bought uncultivated land, established orchards, and built houses for his workers. In 1892, the Land Boom ended in a depression: banks closed, mortgages were foreclosed, and people lost savings. Tom faced ruin, having expanded with optimism. Like many, he thought the boom would last. When it collapsed, Tom's hair turned white overnight.

Eliza helped her husband during the crisis. She listened patiently, and her serene, cheerful nature brought a sense of security to their home.

In a depression, the ultimate burden falls on the mothers. The men worried about finding money to buy food and clothes, but the mothers had to prepare meals for their children without adequate provisions, generally going hungry themselves and they had to keep the family clothed and warm in winter. In some cases, mothers were separated from their children, who were sent to stay with relatives who could afford to care for them.

During the depression of the 1890's, Doncaster had the great advantage of being a rural area. There was plenty of fruit to eat during the picking season, vegetables could be grown on the land, and most people had a cow. Because fruit was hard to sell and fetched only a low price, the orchardists were not well off. However, by going to market, they had the opportunity to buy meat and other supplies at a lower cost. Percy Crouch once surprised his family by bringing home a leg of lamb that cost only one shilling and sixpence (15 cents).

After the depression, a few bare paddocks were left where orchards had been cut down and subdivided by land boom companies, ready for sale as housing blocks. In other cases, orchardists repossessed land that had been sold, but not paid for, by land speculators who went bankrupt. Tom Petty had thought he would never recover from the depression, but he did recover, and in later years bought more land to establish even more orchards.

Eliza carried on the Clay tradition of hospitality. Her daughters often had friends stay at "Bay View." As the younger girls grew up, they invited guests to musical evenings in the large front room. Years earlier, Alfred Hummel had held social evenings there. With their pleasing voices, Lily and Ruby were favourite singers. Occasionally, Eliza joined Tom and the family on camping trips to Ferntree Gully. At other times, Tom and the girls rode with visitors.

Eliza took an active interest in all district affairs and supported Tom in all his activities. Tom, a born leader and active member of fruit grower organisations, was a good speaker with a keen sense of humour. Meanwhile, Eliza frequently travelled to functions in Victoria and other states, where she met wives of other fruit growers.



Tom and Eliza Petty's family camping at Sassafra. 1920

Tom retired in 1913 and he and Eliza went for a trip to England. A farewell function was arranged at the Athenaeum Hall in Doncaster. The farewell committee took up a collection and presented Mr Petty with a travelling bag, suitably inscribed; Mrs Petty with a handsome handbag and a rug to each. In his farewell speech, the chairman spoke of their visit to the "old country" but Tom talked of leaving for "home". England was always referred to as "home", even by those born in Australia.

They enjoyed the sea voyage, calling at Eastern ports and visiting the Continent. In England the gardens were gay with spring flowers. Tom and Eliza went to Doncaster in Yorkshire where they presented a flag from Doncaster School in Melbourne to Doncaster School in Yorkshire. Eliza sent a postcard to her son Edwin with a view of Bingley, the village where Grandma Jane Petty was born. It showed a pretty little place with pleasant views of the River Aire.

They went to Devonshire to visit Hall Farm at Petrockstowe where Eliza was born and Frithelstock, her mother's birthplace.



"Tom" & Eliza met by Mr & Mrs Moase at Hall farm



The ancestral home of John Clay, at Petrockstowe, Devon, England, taken in June 1913,
Pictured are Mr and Mrs Moase and their daughter Averil Harding.



Tom & Eliza touring England in 1913, tracing their ancestral lineage.

The farewell committee found, after balancing their accounts there were some extra funds. On the Petty's return they offered this to Tom to buy a present for his wife but Eliza said Tom had given her plenty of presents in England. She suggested they purchase a clock for the library at the Athenaeum Hall.



Tom & Eliza's new house "Bingley" Doncaster road built in 1913

Tom and Eliza moved to Box Hill, leaving "Bay View" to their son Frank. Later they returned to Doncaster Road to a new house, "Bingley". Now that Eliza had more leisure, she was able to enjoy sewing for organisations in which she was interested. She was a skilful needlewoman and her work graced stalls at frequent bazaars and she loved crocheting for her friends.

Tom Petty died in 1923. Eliza received letters of condolence from the many organisations in which he had been highly esteemed. Eliza continued to live at "Bingley" till her death in 1928.

The Death of Mr "Tom" Petty

Mr Tom Petty died on 22 January 1923 at the age of 77 years. His death and life achievements were reported in the "The Reporter" (Box Hill) newspaper of 2 February 1923 as follows:

DONCASTER'S FINE OLD MAN. LATE MR. T. PETTY.

A promoter of the fruit industry.



An older Thomas "Tom" & Eliza Petty
in the garden at "Bingley" abt.1918

"The late Mr Thomas Petty, J.P., was the father of the fruit industry in the Doncaster district. When others said there was too much fruit grown, he planted and urged others to plant, and his confidence and energy proved a great factor in making Doncaster one of the leading fruit-growing centres of Australia. He was a life-long member of the local Fruit growers' Association, and was generally a delegate to the annual Victorian Conference, where his wise counsel and sound judgment was always recognised. Mr Petty was one of the first to suggest a cool store for Doncaster. He suggested a trial shipment of W.B.C. pears and in many ways assisted the industry.

Over 40 years ago he was elected a member of the Bulleen Shire Council for the Doncaster riding, filling the position of president on several occasions. He only had one election contest, and voluntarily retired from the position of councillor. He was one of the first trustees of the Doncaster Athenaeum, and held the position till his death. He was an active worker in helping to secure the telephone, electric light, and new water service.

He always identified himself with the temperance movement. Coming from the Old Country as a Band of Hope boy, he stuck to his pledge consistently. He was the oldest member of the Doncaster I.O.R., being connected with the Order for 50 years, and in the early days of the local tent took a very active part, and was always ready to assist in the cause of total abstinence, especially among the young, and when the vote was taken recently on the no licence question, he was one of the local committees who worked so successfully in Doncaster (Doncaster securing the three-fifths majority in favour of no-licence).

In church matters Mr Petty took a very liberal view, though he was always a member of the Church of England, and was held in very high esteem, as was shown by the crowded congregation that met at a memorial service held on January 28th, when the Rev. H. H. Gardner referred fittingly to the life and death of the deceased. Mr Petty took a deep interest in every effort made for the training of the young. On several occasions the superintendent of the Sunday School in connection with the Church of Christ, Doncaster, referred to Mr Petty as being the one who suggested the starting of that school over 41 years ago, and he had always shown a lively interest in its work.

Many of the residents think that no one man has ever exercised a greater influence for the prosperity of the district and its general advancement than Mr Tom Petty, and his sudden removal is very keenly felt by all." - "The Reporter" (Box Hill)

Petty family tree

Web Version



Thomas Petty b.1809 d.1877 [m 1842] **Jane Thompson** b.1819 d.1894

- George Thompson Petty b.1843 d.1844
- **Thomas Petty** (JP) b.28-4-1845 d.22-1-1923 [m 30-8-1873] **Eliza Clay** b.14-3-1850 d.8-7-1928
- Elizabeth Thompson Petty b.1847 d.1911
- George Thompson Petty b.1850 d.1923
- John Petty b.1852 d.1946
- James Thompson Petty b.1859 d.1861



Thomas Petty (JP) b.28-4-1845 d.22-1-1923 [m 30-8-1873] **Eliza Clay** b.14-3-1850 d.8-7-1928

- 1. Rosamond Agnes Abigail **Petty** b.5-8-1874 d.22-3-1949 [m 26-6-1895] William Arthur **Webb** b.12-7-1869 d.28-3-1950
 - Dorothy Rosamond **Webb** b.12-3-1899 d.19-9-1978 [m 1921] Gerald Stanley **Grover** b.20-12-1888 d.14-4-1977
 - Marjorie Alice **Webb** b.26-6-1901 d.9-8-1949 [m 1923] Neville Arthur Gull **Johnson** b.28-11-1896 d.15-1-1979
 - Lennox Arthur Petty **Webb** b.18-5-1903 [m 26-3-1932] Helen Margaret **Turner** b.1905
 - Ena Phyllis **Webb** b.30-7-1906 d.6-3-1975 [m 9-11-1933] Douglas Cyril **Whitten** b.27-12-1903 d.8-3-1989
- 2. Lily Elizabeth Catherine **Petty** b.7-7-1875 d.4-3-1876
- 3. Violet Eliza Jane **Petty** b.7-7-1875 d.12-3-1876 (Twin)
- 4. Thomas Henry **Petty** b.9-12-1876 d.28-4-1955 [m 22-8-1900] Edith Isabel **Watts** b.1877 d.19-7-1956
 - Henry Royden **Petty** b.18-6-1901 d.11-7-1979 [m 1932] Kathleen Faith Boddy **Drury** b.1907
 - Hubert Geoffrey **Petty** b.6-12-1905 d.9-3-1978 [m 1929] Mary Jean **McDonald** b.1907 d.12-12-1983
 - Arnold Edwin **Petty** b.18-3-1909 d.2-10-1983 [m 23-9-1939] Lucy May **Huxable** b.1912 d.1985
- 5. Robert Edwin **Petty** b.29-4-1878 d.11-4-1962 [m 31-7-1907] Emma Elizabeth **Watts** b.1880 d.22-8-1973
 - Jean Isabel **Petty** b.1911 d.1998 [m 1913] George (beattie) Gregory **Beavis** b.1913
 - Norma Enid **Petty** b.6-4-1918 d.12-6-2014
- 6. Albert Thompson **Petty** b.13-11-1879 d.30-5-1962 [m 5-11-1902] Sarah (sissie) **Duncan** b.1883 d.25-10-1947
 - Edna Muriel **Petty** b.6-12-1904 d.1975 [m 28-4-1926] Stanley **White** b.1901 d.22-6-1961
 - Albert Duncan **Petty** b.21-6-1907 d.12-4-1986 [m] Winifred Clare **English** b.1916 d.3-8-1976
 - Hilda Margaret **Petty** b.19-7-1914 [m 1935] Clive Olaf **Hill** b.6-11-1910 d.1988
- 7. Ethel May **Petty** b.1-6-1881 d.11-9-1943 [m 17-2-1906] Robert Henry **Petty** b.24-6-1878 d.1943
- 8. Francis Roland "Frank" **Petty** b.20-12-1882 d.7-3-1953 [m 15-8-1906] Anne Josephine **Tierney** b.29-8-1883 d.8-12-1921
 - John Rowland **Petty** b.29-5-1907
 - Lindsay James **Petty** b.22-3-1913 d.24-4-1981
- 9. Frederick John **Petty** b.7-4-1884 d.18-12-1960 [m 29-4-1908] Lillian Theresa **Hislop** b.10-11-1883 d.8-1-1961
 - Gladys Verna **Petty** b.15-1-1910 d.29-4-1991 [m 1935] Reginald Edward **Flower** b.14-2-1902 d.14-2-1985
 - Neil Frederick **Petty** b.23-6-1918 d.27-6-1990 [m 1948] Lauris Olive **Fitzsimons** b.14-12-1926 d.29-12-1995
- 10. Violet Eliza **Petty** b.6-12-1885 d.12-5-1975 [m 8-4-1909] Arthur Richard Edward **Ashton** b.1883 d.7-9-1962
 - Howard Hamer **Ashton** b.25-4-1910 d.11-5-1910
 - Johnston Arthur **Ashton** b.7-5-1912 d.8-8-1990 [m] Lorna **Findlay**
 - Marjorie Joy **Ashton** b.1915 [m] Thomas **Smith**
- 11. Victoria Lillian "Lil" **Petty** b.4-7-1887 d.15-5-1955 [m 14-12-1921] Ethelbert **Crouch** b.22-3-1886 d.12-8-1986
- 12. Ruby Isobel **Petty** b.24-8-1888 d.1-7-1968 [m 1912] John Edward **Russell** b.1882 d.14-7-1935
 - Effie Eliza **Russell** b.13-8-1915 d.6-1994 [m 1941] Anatol **Kagan**
 - Phillip Edward **Russell** b.26-4-1916
 - Henry James **Russell** b.3-12-1917
- 13. Elsie Gertrude **Petty** b.16-11-1889 d.26-10-1969 [m 1913] Percy Llewellyn **Edgoose** b.7-8-1886 d.11-5-1976
 - Tom Alfred **Edgoose** b.15-2-1914 d.15-2-1942
 - James Winfrey **Edgoose** b.16-7-1922 d.17-4-1978
 - Harry **Edgoose** b.1928 [m 1928] Joyce **Florence**



Thomas & Eliza Petty (Clay) with family 1887
 Ethel May, Albert Thompson, Thomas (holding Violet Eliza) Rosamond Agnes Abigail,
 Eliza (holding Victoria Lillian - born 4th July 1887), Thomas Henry, Robert Edwin
 Front: Francis Roland, Frederick John



Thomas & Eliza Petty with extended family 31st July 1907
 On the occasion of Robert Edwin's marriage to Emma Elizabeth Watts
 Standing: Robert, Thomas, Ethel, Frederick, Rosamond, Ena, William Webb, Francis, Ruby, Albert
 Sitting: Sarah (Duncan) - holding Albert, Lillian, Thomas, Marjorie, Eliza, Elsie, Violet, Edith (Watts) - holding Hubert
 Front: Edna, Lennox