

Vernon & Maisie Clay



Pictured with grandchildren Simon and Michelle at Doncaster 1962

Vernon Herbert Clay born 24th August 1910
eldest child of Herbert George Clay and Rose Tully
married 11-10-1933

Ella "Maisie" Hewish born 9th October 1909
eldest child of John Henry Hewish and May Crouch

3 children

Barbara b.1935

Trevor b.1937

Lynton b.1945

Vern grew up on the family orchard in Dehnert St., Doncaster, living with his parents and two sisters. He went to the Doncaster State School, completing year eight, before, like most children of that era, he followed in his father's footsteps in the orchard.



Doncaster State School 1921 - grades 6,7,8

Vernon Clay extreme right - Ella Maisie Hewish 2nd back row 2nd left

It was in July 1946 when his father died. With his mother having already died two years earlier, this meant that Herbert's will was executed, leaving Vern with the property, one sister with the family home and the other a cash payout.

Orcharding methods had changed very little over the decades and were mainly small family properties. The fruit was picked by hand and stored in boxes at the local cool-store until ready to be taken to the wholesale market by the individual growers. Horses were used in the orchard until tractors became available in the 1920-30s, but Vern was still using a horse-drawn spray pump up until around 1948. "A horse has the advantage of moving the spray pump along on command."



"Bave-u" Horse drawn spray pump (Typical)

The spray pump was fitted with long hoses so that four trees could be sprayed without having to move the unit along. (the same as in the picture) It was converted to a tractor pull but was soon replaced by a new tractor PTO (power take-off) driven sprayer with a much bigger vat.



International W4 Tractor pulling a 'Petty' plough abt.1948
(Typical of Vern at that time)

Vern had been using an International W4 tractor with steel wheels. (same as in the picture) It was replaced in the early 1950s with a "Fordson-major diesel" with power take-off and 3Point Linkage. The 3pt. linkage and the PTO had the advantage of making the tractor more universal with the different implements that could fitted to it.

There was a degree of competition between the local orchardists as to who grew the best fruit, and Vern was always keen to show his best at everything he did.

Although he was not an innovator, he was highly regarded as a fruit grower. Vern had an employee working full-time and employed others during the pear harvest period. When my brother Trevor finished school, the hired help was retrenched to make way for him to work on the orchard.

In the years after WWII, Vern grew mainly peaches and pears, with many pears exported to England during this period. This was a very lucrative time. He had space rented in the East Doncaster Orchardist's Coolstore, where his fruit would be stored until ready to be marketed or packed for export. Peaches would be picked early in the morning to avoid the heat of the day and packed in the shed during the afternoon. The packed peaches were then picked up by a marketing man with his truck in the evening [usually Sunday] for the wholesale market the next morning, returning with empty boxes and cash from the sale of the fruit. He also used a neighbour to process and market fruit during the late 1950s.

Peach varieties grown: included Pickering, Anzac, Beale, Bendigo Beauty, Smiths, Hale, Ireland, Wiggins and Noonans. These varieties came mainly from 'sports' and were named after the person who developed them. Pear grown: - Packham, Beurre Bosc, Winter Nelis, Winter Cole and Josephine. There were some apples planted in the early 1950s that reached production but never reached their full potential, with the ever-increasing urban sprawl approaching before the property was sold to developers in 1961.

It was in this same period that a property was bought on the Mornington Peninsula at Red Hill South to continue fruit growing, which became Trevor's orchard with Vern and Lynton working on the property in the early years.

At the time of relocating, it was also a time when fruit growing was adapting from handling fruit in boxes to "Bulk-handling", where forklifts were used to sift bins holding 20 boxes. This was closely followed by the need to produce more fruit to offset rising costs a decade later. The family orchards of 20-30 acres were no longer viable.

Ironically, after a century of fruit growing, the viability of fruit growing in Doncaster coincided with urbanisation.



The house at Red Hill South, where Vern & Maisie lived in retirement

Vern and Maisie bought a 22-acre orchard property at Red Hill South in about 1964, where they built a house to retire. It was not far from where Trevor and his family lived, becoming another one of the orchards that Trevor was working at that time.

Vern, after a lifetime of growing fruit and a fourth-generation Doncaster fruit grower, lived happily in retirement at Red Hill South until his death in June 1981

Maisie lived in Mornington after her husband's death before passing in February 1992. Their ashes rest together at the Springvale crematorium.



Like his father, Vern was a quiet man, but enjoyed his sport. He played football and held the wicket-keeper role with the Doncaster Central Cricket Team.

His father Herbert and son Trevor were also wicket keepers, with Herbert being awarded a cup for the "greatest number of catches" for the 1904-5 season.



Doncaster Central Cricket Team 1930

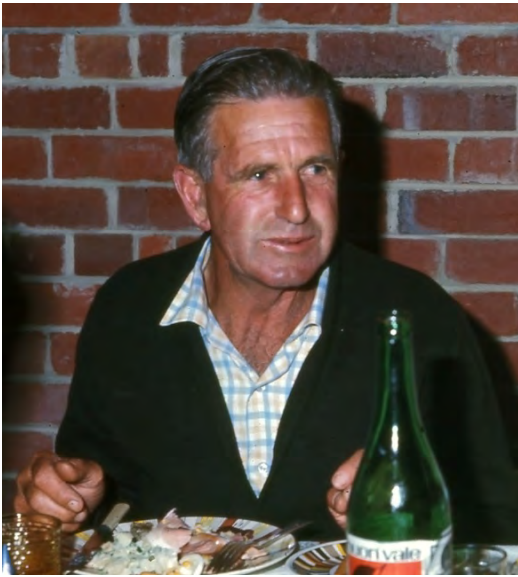
Back: Frederick Zander, Albert Zander, Ron Cousin, **Vern Clay**, Clive Petty,
Seated: Albert Miller, Harold Cra e, Albert "Pat" Fromhold,
William "Billy" Willis, Dave Heaphy, Stanley Crouch



Doncaster football Club – 'Premiers 1929'

Back: Jack Crossman snr. (trainer), Bill Beavis (trainer), Therold Smith, Frank "fritz" Bullen
Mr W.E.Goodson (President), **Herbert George Clay (Secretary)**, Les Britt (Timekeeper)
George "stiffy" Bullen, Wally Rhodes, Ben Crouch (trainer), C. "tiny" Davis (trainer)
Centre: Joe McKane (boundary umpire), Harold Britt, Jack Crossman, Jack Clay,* Horrie Bullen
Ted Aumann (captain,) Jim Riddell, David Sleeth, Doug Britt, Cliff Whitten, Arty Peter-Budge
Front: George Zelius, Albert Zander, Billy Crossman (mascot), Rupert Zerbe, **Vernon Herbert Clay**
* 'Jack' Clay - John Clifford Clay - son of Arthur Rowland Clay

There are very few photos available of Vern and his life...



Left: Christmas 1968
at his sisters. (Mildred
Smith)



Right: Lynton and
Carol's wedding at Red
Hill South in March 1979



A day out in the 1930s car.



In the 1930s, Vern & Maisie built a house on Herbert's property in Doncaster Rd. (which was a 13 ½ acre block previously owned by Vernon's Grandmother Mary-Ann in the early 1900s)
Photo taken by Allan Hewish. abt.1940



The Doncaster house 1951



Working in the veggie patch 1950



The family on Christmas day 1948



Photo taken by Allan Hewish Nov.1947 at Doncaster
 standing: Maisie Clay, May Hewish
 Vern Clay, Myrtle Hewish, Alaine Hewish, Lynton Clay, Barbara Clay, Graeme Hewish, Trevor Clay



The wedding of Vernon and Maisie Clay 11th October 1933
 Bridal party: David Sleeth, Mildred Clay, Mavis Clay, Les Zerbe, Allan Hewish (best man)



Wedding reception of Vernon & Maisie Clay at "Hillcrest" 10th Oct. 1933
 Bridle party ~ David Sleeth, Mavis Clay, Maisie, Vernon, Mildred Clay. Les Zerbe~
 Fred Burt (minst), Henry Crouch, Rose Clay, Allan Hewish, Herbert Clay,
 John Tully snr, Rosina Tully, May Crouch, Ron Hewish, ?, ?, ?