

SALT ON THE WINDOWS



**1940s/1950s memories
of our house 'Irvine' at 42 Beach Street**

Sudden squall across the bay, four minutes to bring the washing in. Doors slam. Lean against the front door to close it before wind becomes too strong. Listen to the sand being flung against the windows. Windows salted up again.

Terrible fog, ships moored out in bay till it clears. Station Pier can't be seen from our attic, tugboats can be heard hooting to each other.

Scurry of cranes cranking up ready to move cargo. Pilot Boat rushing out to meet more ships, tugs coming over to Port from Williamstown.

Blue Peter on one ship at Station Pier: must be going in the morning. I wonder where it is heading. Flags from all nations fluttering on the big ships in port.

Magic sunset, sea looks pink. The dreaded clanking of the creaking dredge begins at sunset, and echoes over the water to Port Melbourne. It must have a hundred buckets rotating. It keeps most Port residents awake – or does the drone of the great beast lull them to sleep? Where do they put all the sand they constantly remove?

**Riot at Pier Hotel.
Two ships in Port:
New Australia and Georgic.
English and Irish seamen drinking at pub on our corner.**

**Paddy wagon at our front gate.
Police, punches, paddy wagon
rocked by compromised seamen.
Chair from pub, flying over our front
fence. (We still have the chair.)
Silence till these two ships arrive in
Port again to settle another score.**

No flowers in front garden, only mirror bush. Tough little tree on nature strip, called *Itchy Powder Tree* by kids, good for annoying other kids. Same trees somehow still there in 2000, having survived pollution, storms, wind and dogs, and overzealous Council workers.

**Oh good, the dustman is coming.
He backs up the lane, banging the
fences as the horses patiently push the
heavy cart backwards. Quite a feat.
Collect the horse manure for the
rhubarb. We have great rhubarb.**

Guy Fawkes Day.

At dusk many fires are lit, using flotsam found on the beach in each sheltered corner section of the concrete sea wall along Beach Street. People come down from Bay, Nott, Princes Street to watch the show. Sky rockets, flower pots, tom thumbs, penny bungers etc. start to appear. Fathers always in charge of fires. This happens in every street in Port Melbourne.

What is that delicious aroma? Swallow & Ariell are cooking their Christmas puddings. We are almost indifferent to the usual everyday biscuit baking aroma, but the Christmas puddings smell really great. The kids all go to the back door of Swallows for a sample.

Missions to Seamen, now Fox Hay. Interesting people from all over the world live here. Women in different clothes to us Port people. Brown eyed children. Curries cooking, hens are running all over the place.

**Bus Depot, otherwise known as
the Tramways Depot:**

Early morning our house fills with fumes from the many buses that start up and leave for Garden City or Melbourne. Evening comes

and the buses return, backing up to our lane, hitting the fence most times. Our Bus Stop is at the corner of Beach and Bay Streets. The driver sometimes remembers to stop for us. He likes to swing the bus at a great speed around the corner. The brakes on those buses always screech.

**Men wear mostly brown hats.
We had an effective whirlwind
right at the front gate that took a
brown hat high up into the air,
much to the surprise of its owner.
Ladies wear hats also,
and of course never go out without
their gloves on, as they pull their
jeeps behind them up to Bay Street,
or South Melbourne Markets.**

Pigeons.

I think every second house in Port Melbourne has Homing Pigeons.

They are let out in the morning in a great rush of feathers, and return in the evening.

**A former owner of the Wine Saloon
in Beach Street between Bay and Nott
Streets had been an Italian bloke,
called 'Killer Joe' as his wine was
cheap and nearly killed you.**

**Milk is stolen from our door to add
to the cheap wine or methylated
spirits that the winos drink over on
the beach.**

Neighbours

Mrs Mick Dickens runs the Café next to the Wine Saloon. Others between the Mission to Seamen and Pier Hotel are Edwards, Morton, Alba Floor Surface Company, McLeavy, Schipkie, Clarke, Brady and Scott. Between us and Pier Hotel is the Port Phillip Stevedore Company, and some billboards.

Port-born Janice Christine MacDonald neé Morton died in 2015, a victim of Alzheimer's Disease. She had lost these memories, and those written into her books. Jan was active in the PMH&PS and authored 'Thomas Edwards & Family: Farriers of Sandridge/Port Melbourne' and 'Monkey for a Yacht', the story of her grandfather, Eli 'Dick' Edwards.

**Anzac Day
Hundreds of poppies appear
on the grass across the road from
our house. Bands play in the Rotunda
further up Beach Street and the
returned soldiers march to the RSL
memorial for the service.
The Last Post can be heard
across the waters.**

A dead body on the beach.

A body has washed up on the beach next to the Navy Boat Shed at Town Pier. Everyone in Port is talking about it. All the kids want to go down and see the body, but the Police have it all cordoned off.

Rodda's, corner of Nott and Beach: Great puffs of white powder everywhere. They crush the rock for talcum powder. The kids all use it for chalk. The road nearby is always white.

Streamers

**The tide has gone out again,
leaving the beach covered
in streamers, rotting onions
and other food discarded by the
ships that have left Station Pier.
Rats are having a feast.
The seaweed is starting to rot in
the sun, the smell is terrible.**

Fishermen are out in the bay very early. The Beazley family dominates the fishing industry in Port Melbourne. Many people come down to fish on Station Pier or to collect mussels from the pylons. Large sharks can sometimes be seen lurking in the warm shallow water, very close to the beach, right across the road in front of our house.

Jan MacDonald 2000