

Jack Pretty OAM

Edited notes from an interview by Ruth McGowan, for the Jindivick Progress Association, on March 26, 2014 in Drouin, Victoria, Australia.

The Jindivick General store was owned by the Pretty Family for more than 65 years. Jack Pretty was the manager for 50 years (1952-2002) and was well known around the district as his mother's family selected farming land in the 1870s and his father's family settled here in the 1880s.

Jack went to the local primary school in the 1930s with about 50 students and remembers in those days that everyone walked to school, some having to walk more than 4kms to and from school. Some children rode their ponies and there was a special pony paddock to the south of the current school. School ended at Grade 8 which was often the end of formal education for many local school children unless they studied Intermediate Level by correspondence or could get transport into the only local high school in Warragul. Bullock team logged the forest and very few people had cars. The Jindivick Hall was the centre of local entertainment and fortnightly concerts were the social event of the district in the days before electricity. Each of the communities along the local roads took turns to put on concerts and they would be hilarious and a great source of fun. A kerosene lamp would light the way in and there is a special place above the arch where the lamp went. Sometimes young folk would walk to and from Rokeby for a dance on a Saturday night, a distance of 8 km, relying on lanterns or a full moon to see the way.

The arrival of electricity in 1938 saw the end of lamps and candles and ushered in an era of home comforts and especially modern electric milking machines. Dairying hit its heydays in the 1950s in this area with the application of science to improved pasture management and fodder conservation and the arrival of the versatile Massey Ferguson tractor in place of horses all leading to higher stocking rates and the prosperous expansion of dairy farms in the Jindivick area. Instead of having to milk the small herd by hand and haul milk cans to the side of the road for daily delivery, farmers could now use stainless steel electrified milking equipment and refrigerated vats to store milk in. In those days, when Jindivick was known as 'the Toorak of dry-land dairy farming' there were at least 21 farms between Jindivick and Neerim south ranging in size from 40 ac to 98ac and 25- 60 cows. In 2014, there are only three farms along this road, on triple the acreage and a medium size herd is 300 cows!

Now in his late 80s Jack is still fighting fit and is a keen cyclist. Since he was 17 he has played in bands and continues this day as a regular Double Bass musician in several Jazz bands around Victoria. Many locals remember with fondness when Jack ran the General Store that had everything you could need and if it wasn't on the shelves, he would get it in for you. Local children always loved buying their lollies from the huge variety displayed in big jars inside the glass counter. If you were new to the district and visiting the store, Jack would introduce new residents to others in the community and help them settle in. He assisted the Hall Committee for many years and would quietly go out of his way to assist vulnerable people and those in need. In 2003, Jack was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for his services to the Jindivick community.