

# ORBOST & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

P.O. BOX 284 ORBOST VIC 3888



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## NEWSLETTER

No. 102 OCTOBER, 2013

### The Jensen Family and their time at **“ORBOST HOUSE”**

by Marilyn Morgan

**Background information:** Mrs Ruth Hannah Macalister, 1861-1932, established “Orbost House” as a boarding house in about 1900. Following her demise “Orbost House” was taken over by her son, “Reg” and his wife and they continued the Macalister family’s association until the accommodation house was purchased by “Slim” and Eileen Somerville and Lindsay and Joan Jensen, in partnership, in 1963.

### Orbost House

\*  
 Macleod Street, Orbost.

“Comforts of Home from Home”

This comfortable boarding house offers exceptional advantage to Tourists, Travellers and the General Public.

TARIFF: Moderate.

Private Sitting Room for Ladies. ——— Gent’s Smoke and Reading Room.

Board by day, weekly or permanent. Cab meets all trains,

Coach leaves house weekly for Cann River, Club Terrace, and Combiobar.

Letters and Telegrams promptly attended to.

Phone 34.

P.O. BOX 59.

R. H. MACALISTER, Proprietress.



◀ 1921

These advertisements cover Mrs R. H. Macalister’s time at “Orbost House”.

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COMFORTABLE BOARDING ESTABLISHMENT . . . . .

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Cab meets every Train.

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PHONE 34.

Box 59.

**R. H. MACALISTER,**  
 Proprietress.

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Ladies’ Lounge.  
 Gent’s Smoke and Reading Rooms.

“Tariff Moderate.”

R. H. Macalister,  
 Proprietress.  
 Orbost. Phone 34.  
 P.O. Box 59.

# ORBOST HOUSE

A Comfortable Home for Visitors.

Hot and Cold Water,  
Electric Light,  
Garage free.

Motor Tours to all Places of  
Interest

TARIFF: 8/ Day. 30/ Week.  
(Special Terms for Permanents)

Phone: Orbost 34.

Mrs. R. MACALISTER,



This advertisement from the 1937 "Back To Orbost" booklet is during Mrs Reg Macalister's proprietorship.

## MY TIME AT "ORBOST HOUSE" 1963-2010

This story has been compiled from an interview which Marilyn Morgan conducted with Mrs Joan Jensen in July 2010.

Thanks to Sue and Rom Konieczny for their contribution to the story and providing the coloured photographs which accompany this article.

Prior to coming to Orbost Lindsay and I were on a farm at Murrungowar. We sold the farm and bought "**Orbost House**" in partnership with my parents, 'Slim' and Eileen Somerville, in May 1963, from the Macalister family.

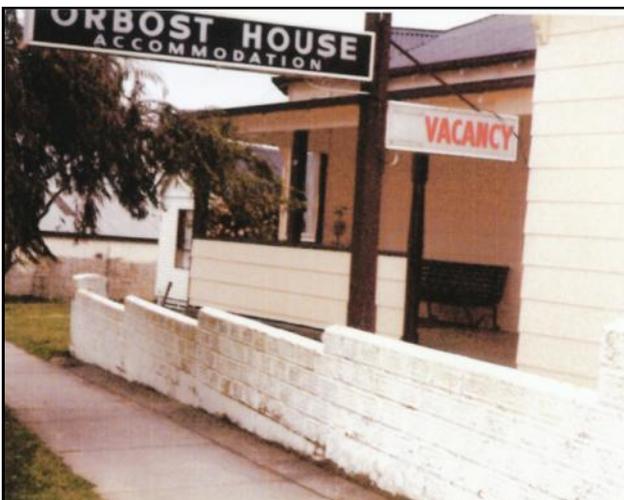
We settled in and the duties at "**Orbost House**" were shared with Mum and Dad (Mr and Mrs Somerville). Lin and I and four children - Jenny, Sue, Ian and Russell. At Murrungowar Mum and I taught Jenny and Sue - they had home schooling. Jenny was Grade 3 and Sue Grade 2 - the boys were too young. When we moved to Orbost Jenny, aged 8, went into grade 3, Sue, aged 7, grade 2, Ian was 4 years of age, and Russell a baby.

We first rented a house in Tarra Street - old Mrs Boucher's home - a nice old place. We used to come through the back fence to

"**Orbost House**". We lived in Tarra Street for a few years, then Lin bought Len Clifford's house next door to "**Orbost House**". Mum and Dad (Mr and Mrs Somerville) lived in "**Orbost House**".

There was a huge combustion stove in the kitchen. It was very hard to cook meals in, however, it wasn't long before we did the kitchen up, so we put in a large gas stove, an electric wall oven and an electric food warmer. This made it a lot easier for the preparation and serving of meals. Then the sewerage was connected and we gradually did up the dining room.

We began catering for the Lions Club in 1969, charging \$1.25 for a three course meal. This continued on a fortnightly basis for 40 years, finishing in 2010. The Lions ladies were catered for once a month and the Business ladies came for a fortnightly lunch. Outside



catering was also provided for various groups. Sandwiches and cakes were supplied for the Golf weekend tournament, and for lunch at the Orbost Show when it was held at Lochiel Park. Private functions were also catered for with the food prepared at "**Orbost House**".

There were lots of PMG and timber workers and the CRB had all their meals at "**Orbost House**". The Country Roads Board camp was at the end of Forest Road and the workers came in for breakfast at 6 a.m. and had to be out by 6.45 a.m. While they ate their breakfasts we packed their lunches which consisted of 4 rounds of sandwiches, home-made cake, fresh fruit and a thermos flask. They came in for their dinner at night.

We were very busy during the construction of the bridges across the Snowy River flats and at Cann River. At our peak we would prepare and cook over one hundred meals at the one sitting.

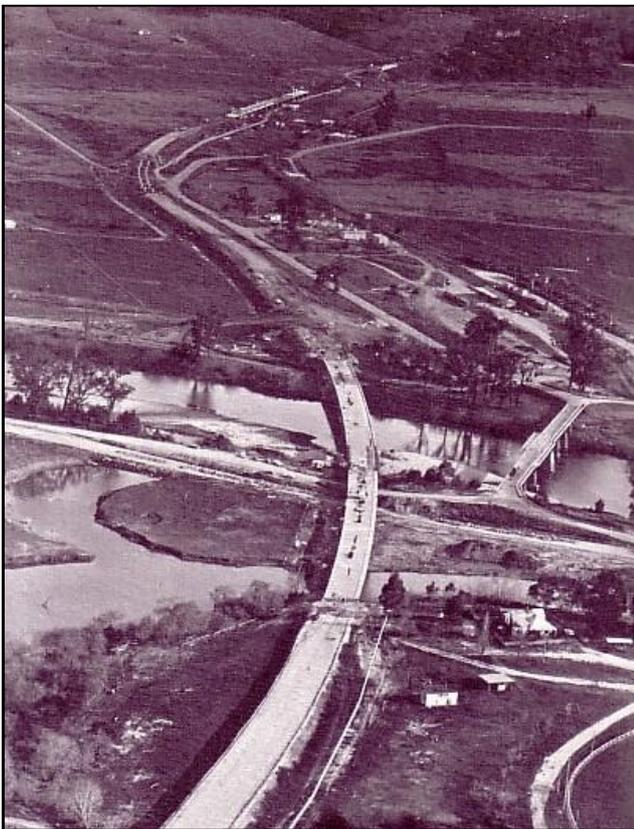


Photo taken during the construction of the bridges and causeways across the Snowy River flats.

All my family assisted with the chores, the boys washed the dishes and the girls waited on the tables at night. As we gradually ran out of kids to help, the Lions Club took it upon themselves to assist. It was a busy time as we'd cook over 60 hot breakfasts, cut the lunches and prepare for the meals at night.

Breakfast would be served from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m., lunch 12 noon to 1 p.m., and dinner from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

We also catered for weddings and on one day we had two - one in the morning and one in the afternoon. We had to temporarily remove the dining room door to fit everyone in.

Over the years we had many boarders. "Permanents" included Bank officers, School teachers, Post Office staff, Railway employees and pensioners who had the rooms in the main front building. The timber workers, mill hands and contractors had the rooms at the back, many living there for some years. There were eleven rooms inside and nineteen outside, with four bathrooms, three shower rooms and three separate toilets. As well as long-term permanent boarders, we also catered for short-term and overnight accommodation. Sometimes beds were made up on the floor over Christmas and during holiday time to cater for the travelling public. Permanent boarders paid about £7.0.0 per week, which included three meals a day, their room tidied each day and linen changed once a week. They did their own washing.



Some of the longer term boarders and patrons during our time were Miss Elsie Lambert (a teacher at Orbost State School for 25 years), Ivan Ostler, Leo and Noel Bills, Helen Murray, Carlo and Jack Scussolin (sleeper cutters who worked under contract to the Victorian Railways), Ted Myhill (who worked at G P Motors), Ted Morrison (from Delegate), Nancy Lundgren, Shirley Beasley (herd tester), Benny Saleni, Pat Leo and Connie Tomlinson. Some of the older, long-term boarders helped out by taking our children to Cubs, tennis and football games and training.

We grew as many vegetables and fruit as possible to become self sufficient and to cut costs. We bought fruit and vegetables from a wholesaler who came up once a week from Melbourne and stayed the night. Shopping day for Orbost House was usually Thursday, and most of our supplies were obtained from the Farmers' Store, Dooley's Butchers and Phillips & Stone.



We had three or four women to help with the housekeeping and early on a couple of gentlemen were employed on a part time basis to help tend the garden and yards. Arty Young helped with the gardening and Pat Heyne and Coral Hofen with the cooking and cleaning. Others employed at various times were Ethel Pike, Alison Bearham, Helen and Jenny Scott and my daughters, Jenny and Sue.



The historic former "Orbost House"

- 8 bedrooms
- 3 bathrooms
- 1945m<sup>2</sup> over 2 titles
- 10 bedrooms + 2 bathrooms in back building
- Undercover BBQ area

**Reduced to \$285,000**

*SEPT 2010*

**THE "ORBOST HOUSE" MACALISTER FAMILY**  
Photographs supplied by Max Milton MACALISTER



Ruth Hannah (BAILEY) MACALISTER  
1861-1932



Thomas Mewburn MACALISTER  
1860-1941



Eileen, Grace, William, Alexandria and Reginald MACALISTER with their parents  
Ruth Hannah (nee BAILEY) and Thomas Mewburn MACALISTER