

# ORBOST & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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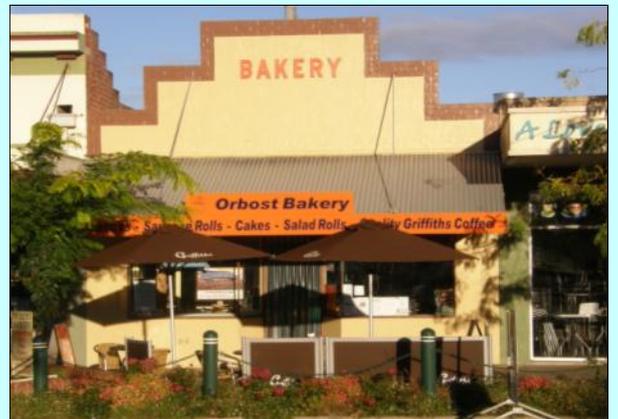
## NEWSLETTER

No. 86 APRIL, 2012

### WESTON'S & ORBOST BAKERY

Marilyn Morgan and May Leatch have compiled this story from interviews with:

Bev Ritchie (nee Weston); Norma Scott (long time resident); Mac Donchi (bread cart deliveries & baker 1944- ); Doug Cuthbertson (baker 1952-58); John Waddell (baker 1972); Greg Kleinitz (baker 1967- ) and Clarence (Clarry) Thomson (pastrycook 1966-72). The Bakery's present owners, Colin Leatham and Wendy Robinson have provided land title information.

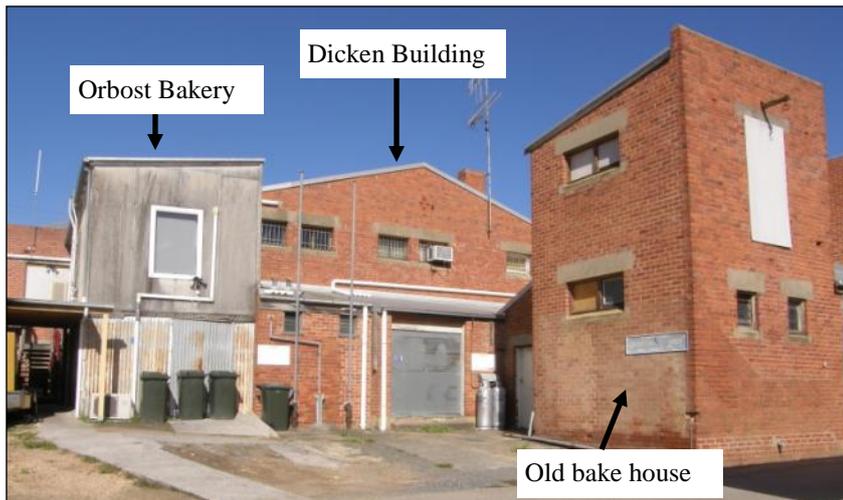


William (Bill) George Weston and his wife Maisie Irene Weston came from Lakes Entrance in 1945 to establish their bakery in Orbost. For nearly 30 years to follow, Weston's Bakery was a landmark in the main street and this business expanded to become the largest bakery this side of Bairsdale, supplying Lakes Entrance to Mallacoota.

You have to look behind the shop front to see how a bakery works. In this case, you have to walk around to the back lane which runs from Tarra Street and behind the shop fronts in Nicholson Street, Orbost. This is where you see the evidence of just what a

large business Weston's Bakery was before local bread making hit the wall in the 1970s with deregulation of the bread making industry and the advent of supermarket-style distribution chains.

Walking down the lane from Tarra Street, you will



*Above: Clarry Thomson worked with this oven as an apprenticed pastry cook from 1966-72.*

notice a two-storey brick building on the left behind the Dicken Building (next door to Orbost Bakery). This was an old bakehouse long before it was rented by Weston's in 1945. Arthur Worsley was the baker here before Weston's.

**Inside this old bakery is the original brick-lined, wood-fired, sand-insulated Small & Shattell oven.** Outside you can spy the original pulley-beam used to haul up bags of flour into the top storage loft.

This old bakery is where Weston's baked their bread, pies, sausage rolls, cakes and pastries, and also did plum puddings and Christmas cakes. For special occasions, a whole pig would be put into the oven, or 600 chickens at the one time for a big ball. Clarrie Thomson has detailed memories of the operation of this bakery. *(See Clarry's story at right).*

Look across to the other side of the lane and you will see a large white cement-block style building from the 1950s. This is what remains of the main Weston's bread bakery built in c.1955. It produced as many as 20,000 loaves of bread a day. [Info. C.T.].

Unlike the older bakery with its wood-fired oven, this new bakery had electric ovens.

As many as 16 people worked here in what was to become a main bread distribution centre.

### Clarry's story - interview 13/8/ 2011 by May Leatch

Clarry Thomson started work as a 15 year old apprenticed pastrycook in 1966 and worked in this old bakery until 1972. Weston's rented the bake house from the Dicken family. When Clarry started, the horse and cart delivery era was ending.

*"Graham McKerlie came in at midnight to light the fire. Wood was delivered to an outside wood heap from a local saw mill in Orbost. Graham would also prepare the tins of pie meat in big cans like jam tins and put them into the oven and when it was cooked, it would be brought out and thickened."*

At 4am, Clarry and Ian (Skeeter) Eaton came on to start the baking, finishing at about 12 noon.

*"To test the heat of the oven, we would stand back about a metre with the oven door open and hurl a handful of flour well into the oven. If it went black or caught alight, it was too hot. We then went outside and got a long stick with a bag on it and got it wet and slapped it around inside the oven to cool it down. At the right temperature, the flour would be a nice light brown. Once the oven was hot, it would hold heat for several weeks. This was the best oven that I ever worked with during my 40 years of baking. It is now the last remaining brick oven in this district."*

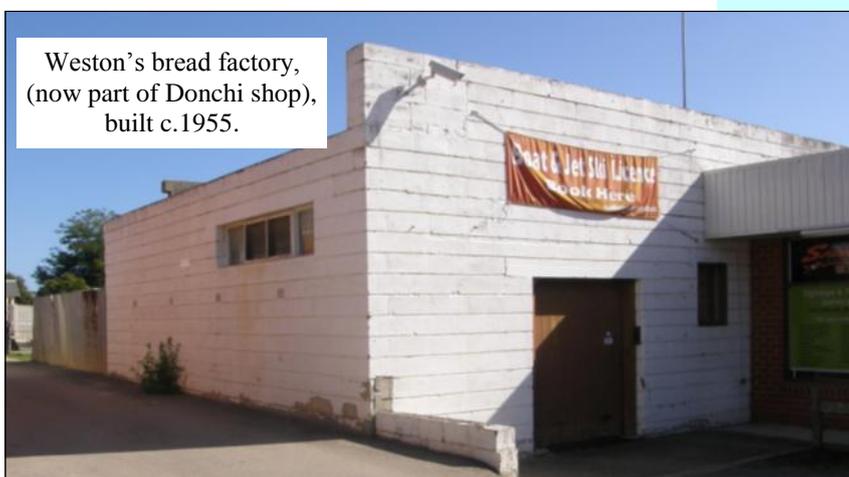
*"We had a number of peels of different lengths to put items into the oven. They were made of pine and wore out quickly because they were being rubbed against the bricks on the floor of the oven. It could hold 40 trays of items."*

*"This was a busy place. A couple of hundred pies were made each day with six people working in here. It was lovely in here in the winter time, but a bit hot in summer."*

*"We did cakes and pastries. We used Ricketts Blue to make blue icing for the cakes."*

*"At Easter time, we'd work flat out making hot cross buns. Christmas cakes were put into wooden frames without a bottom and lined with paper. The cakes never burned. Puddings were done in big 'coffins' filled with water and a lid on the top. You could put wet bags on top and they would steam."*

*"The oven was kept going all the time. The only time that ovens like this stopped working was when the bricks caved in."*



**Bev Ritchie (nee Weston)** - interview 5/10/2011 by Marilyn Morgan

Bev was the daughter of Bill Weston who purchased the bakery business from Arthur Worsley in 1945.

Prior to coming to Orbost, Bill and his wife lived in Lakes Entrance where Mrs Weston's parents had operated the Glenarra Guest House.

Bev recalls the names of some of the people working in the bakery during those early years:

**Pastrycooks:** Mac Donchi, Doug Cuthbertson and Graham McKerlie

**Bread cooks:** Jack Donchi and Ian (Skeet) Eaton.

**Shop staff** included Ruth Legge, Marie Paten, Gwenda Caldwell, Nina Bensi and Aileen Welsh

*"After baking, fresh bread was taken to the Orbost Butter Factory each day and put into the farmers' empty milk [cream] cans for delivery around the district. This meant that wherever the cans were picked up from, bread was delivered to. The Chemist also used this same delivery method to deliver medications to the farmers."*

Bev served in the family shop [now Orbost Bakery] before and after school from the age of 7 years. She hurried home to the shop at lunch time to help and ate her lunch on the way back to school.

*"Meat for the pies was purchased from each butcher shop month about. Eggs were bought from Murray Kerr of Jarrahmond. When eggs were plentiful, extra eggs were preserved for when they were in short supply. Flour came by train to Orbost and was delivered to the shop by truck."*

Bev's mother's working day began at the shop at 6am. The forestry workers would be waiting in the street outside for the shop to open.

In the 1950s, the Westons took a 12 month break from the bakery and the family went holidaying to Queensland. Mr Colin Switzer was left to manage the business.

In the early days, Weston's had a daily delivery service around the district with their own horse and cart. Pat Preston drove the cart which was kept in what is now the car park at the back of the Chemist shop, and the horse paddock was where Peter Donchi now has his shop.

*"My family lived on the premises, at the back of the shop. Under these rooms were store rooms, one of which was used for a bedroom for Laurie and myself. We were the two older daughters."*

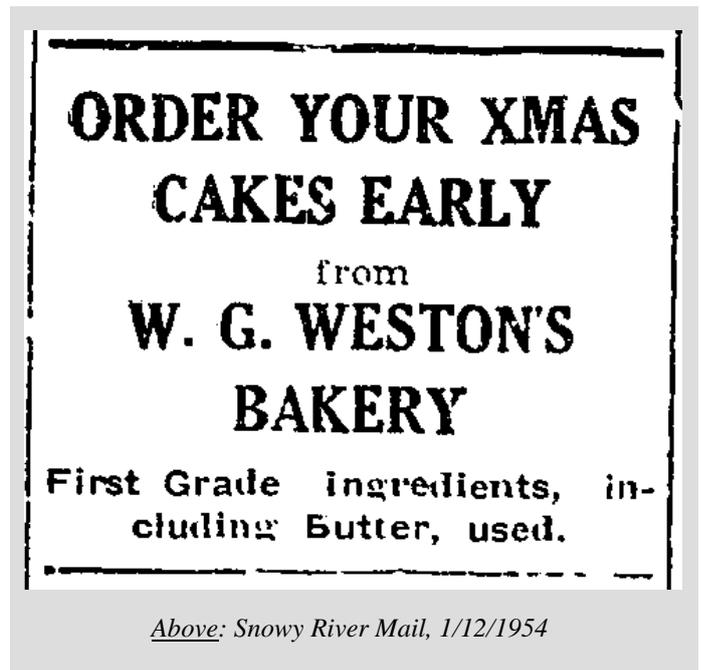
*"The shop always had tables and chairs like a tea room and we always used fresh cream in our cakes."*

**Mac Donchi** - interview 6/10/2011 by Marilyn Morgan

Mac began working for Orbost baker, Arthur Worsley in August 1944, at the age of 13 years. His first job was helping with the bread cart deliveries around town. His working day began at 6am and finished at lunch time.

*"I then went on to become a pastry cook, learning the trade from Arthur Worsley. My pay was £1/5/3 a week with 3d. paid for tax. I began work at 12 midnight and finished at 8am."*

*"Bill Weston bought the bakery in 1945."*



**Doug Cuthbertson** - interview 6/10/11 by Marilyn Morgan

Doug began working with Weston's Bakery at age 17 in 1952.

*"I was an apprenticed baker for 5 years and was taught by Bill Weston. My working day began at 4am and finished at 2pm. The bread was done first, followed by all the pastry cooking, pies and cakes. Fruit loaves and buns were baked twice a week."*

*"About 20 bags of flour were used each week, each bag being 180 lbs. Flour was delivered from the back lane."*

*"When the new bakery opened [now part of Donchi shop site] they used 40 bags of flour each week."*

*"My wage was £10 per week."*

*"I worked at Weston's for 6 years and then worked at Sederlans Bakery at Newmerella and stayed there until they closed."*

**John Waddell** – interview 25/2/2012 by Marilyn Morgan

John started working at the bakery [now part of Donchi shop] in 1972 as an apprenticed baker. **By that time, the bakery had been sold by Weston's and was being operated by the Longhurst family.**

*"I began work at 1am. and finished at 9am. If I finished early, I was sent over to help the pastry cooks in the old bakery at the back of the Dicken Building where the pies and cakes were baked.*

*"We used 150 lb. of flour to make 140 loaves of bread.*

*"On Friday night, the shift would start at 5pm. in the afternoon, ending at 9am. on Saturday morning. This was the only fresh bread for the weekend. When the bakery closed at lunch time on Saturday, any bread left unsold was taken down to Kershaw's cafe [now Chooky's Roost]. This was the only place in town with bread for sale while it lasted for the rest of the weekend.*

**"Sunni Crust bread bought out Longhursts in 1973-74 and that was the finish of bread making here.**

*"Dick Savage started making pies and cakes at the back of the Orbost Bakery shop much like happens today. In the late 1970s, Orbost Bakery was sold to Graham McKerlie and Ian (Sticks) Mathews.*



**Greg Kleinitz** - interview 17/3/2012 by Marilyn Morgan

In the mid 1960s, at age 17 years, Greg started to learn the baking trade. He worked for Weston's and Sederlan's who he says were working together at that time.

*"The bakers were Harold Sederlan, Jackie Donchi, Tommie Jones and myself. I did the 10pm. to 6am. shift. Pies and cakes were made in the old bakery for both shops [Weston's and Sederlan's]. It was a shared arrangement.*

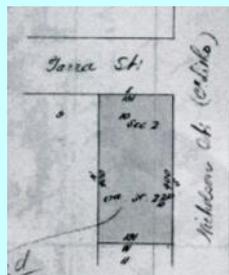
**"In about 1968, people by the name of Longhurst bought the bakery from Weston's. Also at about this time, Patties Bakery began bringing bread into Orbost and the local bakery was unable to compete, and at some time later, bread ceased to be made in Orbost.**

*"I think that it would have been about 1973-74 when Longhurst finished baking in Orbost."*

**Norma Scott** - interview 17/3/2012 by Marilyn Morgan

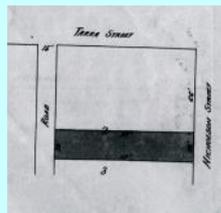
Norma lived with her family in Tarra Street, just nearby to the laneway. She recalls that it was in 1955 that the new bakery [now part of Donchi shop] was being built along the laneway by Weston's. The builder was possibly Reg Macalister or Cecil Winchester. [Note: Lindsay Thomson recalls that the builder was Reg Macalister.]

**Colin Leatham and Wendy Robinson are the present owners of Orbost Bakery.** Colin is shown here with one of the baker's peels used in the old bakery at the back of the Dicken Building. He and Wendy bought the title to Orbost Bakery on **2/11/2007.**



**8/4/1885** - sale of Crown Land in Orbost township; this large block fronting Tarra and Nicholson Streets was purchased for £41 by Bairnsdale surgeon, **D C Morgan.**

**1899-1902** - this block was subdivided into 4 lots and an easement created from Tarra Street. Purchasers of these four lots were: **W J Gluth** publican, A S Saunders, H Cameron, and A H Pardew.



**25/9/1905** - a further subdivision of the lot owned by W J Gluth resulted in new owners: **G O J Gluth**, a hairdresser, became the owner of what was later to become the site of Weston's Bakery. The other larger block [now the Chemist shop] was purchased by A G Salter & O M Salter.

Since then, the bakery site has passed through a number of owners including the Hardy family before being purchased by the **Weston's** on **8/12/1954** and finally by Colin and Wendy in 2007.

- land title information supplied by Colin and Wendy