

WHAT WAS THE OCCASION?

The year was 1940 and this group of people was taking a lunch break from fruit picking at 'Cherrydale', an orchard in Merricks. As the name implies, the orchard's main fruit was cherries although apples, pears and peaches were also grown and sold locally.

Picking cherries was a well-paid job during the summer months and attracted many local casual workers. The rate was £1 (one pound) per day and £6 could be earned per week. There was no work on a Sunday as that was the sabbath. Six pounds was considered a small fortune in those days. One teenager who lived nearby described cherry picking as a family affair. She went picking with her mother and two brothers. "The older ladies, the Mums, made it quite a social occasion. They didn't climb ladders and only picked about half the quantity of fruit that the young people picked, earning about 10/- (ten shillings) a day - half the rate. They picked, ate cherries and had a good talk. You could eat as many cherries as you wanted but after the first couple of days you soon got sick of them."-

Cherrydale was owned by Ron Nobelius and working in the orchard was a family affair for his family also. But for them it was year-round activity. His three daughters, when they finished their schooling, elected to work on the orchard helping with the spraying, pruning and picking in season.

At the end of each cherry-picking season, Ron or Nobby as he was known, threw a picnic for his workers. The Cherrydale picnic was considered a highlight of the year.

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