

KALAMUNDA & DISTRICTS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ORAL HISTORIES

A MEMOIR OF

**Mrs Ella Byett
(nee Schmitt)**





Mrs Ella Byett (nee Schmitt)



Grandparents: Jacob and Annie Schmitt (nee Frizzell)
William and Florrie Sutton (nee Logue)

Parents: George and Alma Schmitt (nee Sutton)

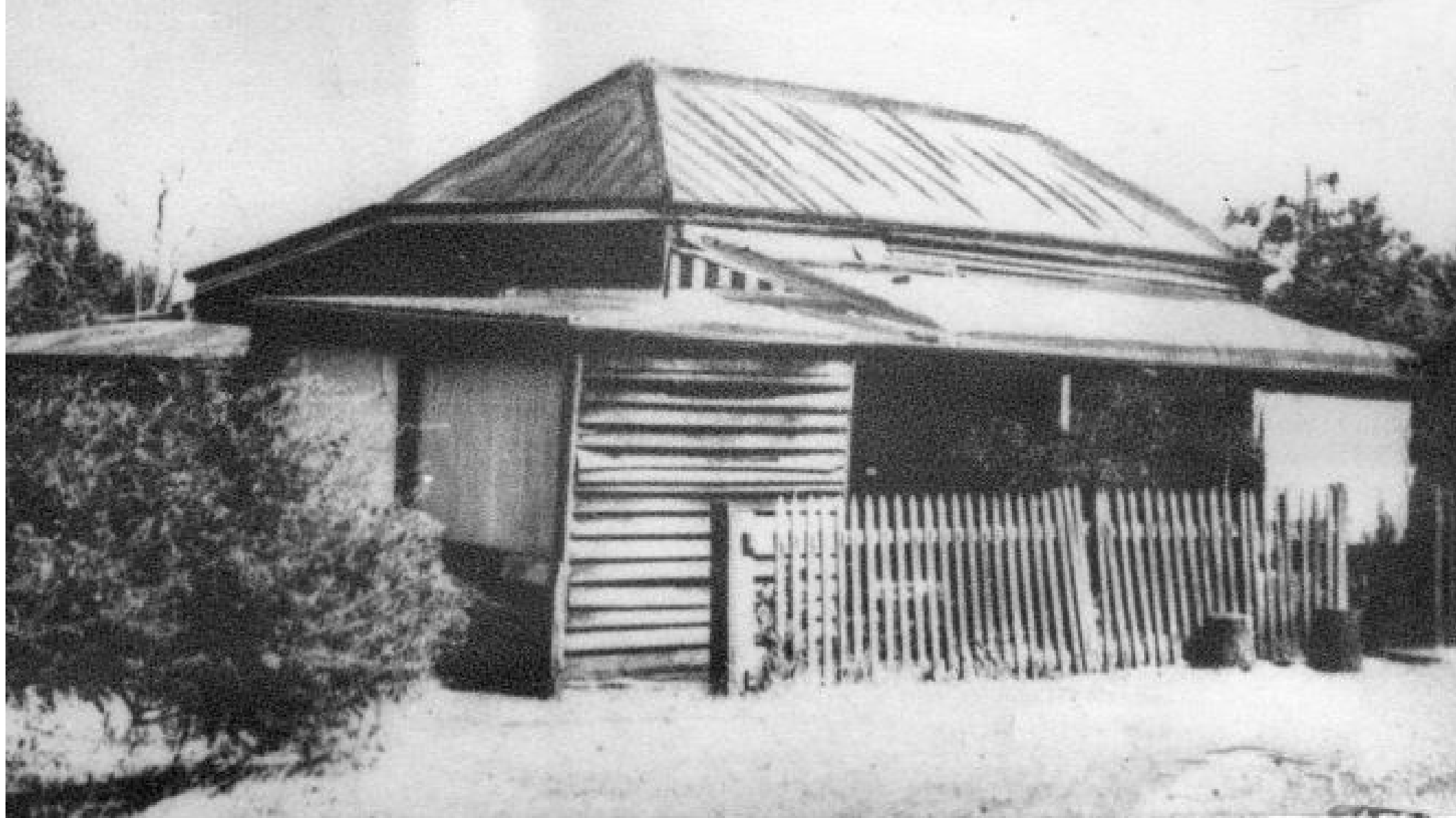
Siblings: Georgina, Edward and Joy Schmitt

Husband: Dennis Byett

Children: Kim, Rosalie Trivett, Caroline, Steven
and Rhonda Byett

*An interview of Mrs Ella Byett (nee Schmitt) was conducted by Bill Shaw, 30 July 1984
on behalf of the Kalamunda and Districts Historical Society.*

*This summary of the original interview was prepared
on behalf of the Bill Shaw Oral History Group*



Schmitt's house. Headingley Road Kalamunda. Circa late 1940's



Ella Schmitt circa 1936, aged 2

Ella Lena Gilmore Schmitt was born at home, on the corner of Headling Road and, what is now, Elizabeth Street on 6 January 1934.

Her grandfather, Jacob, originally from Germany, won part share in a lottery and migrated to Australia to try his luck. He moved around Australia and met his wife Annie in Guildford WA. Together they established an orchard in Mundaring Road, (now Jorgensen Park) Kalamunda in 1895.

Her mother's ancestors can be traced back to John Oakey Davis, a pioneer who settled in Gosnells in 1829. Her great grandfather, Joseph Logue, helped find missing explorers, Panter, Harding and Goldwyer who had gone missing in the NorthWest. It was discovered that they had been murdered by natives who were captured and brought back to Perth.

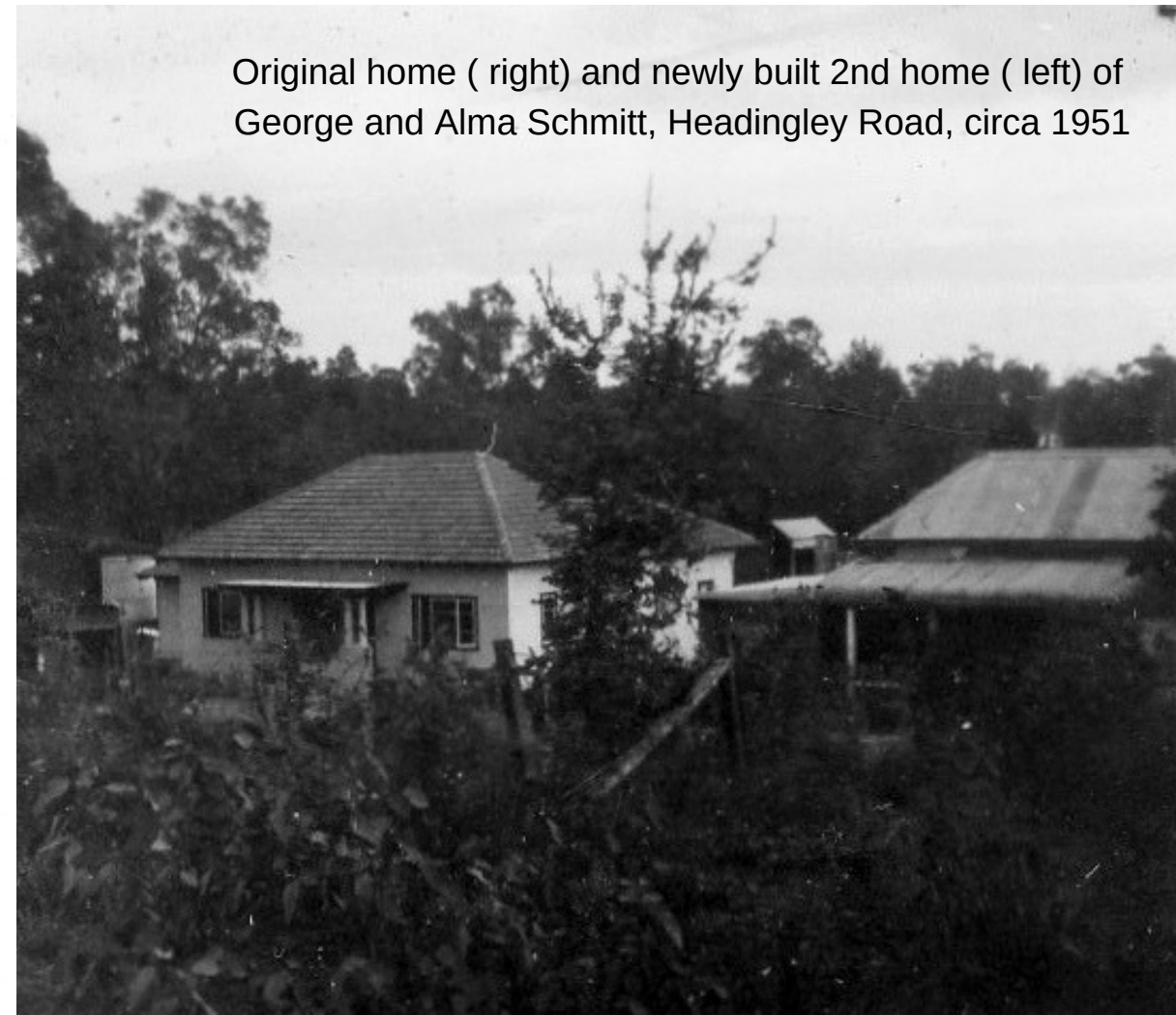
Mrs Arrow's Kindergarten

Mrs Arrow worked for the Church and ran the local sunday school for the Parish. As Ella's mum was pregnant she asked Mrs Arrow if she would give her daughter Georgina kindergarten lessons. Mrs Arrow said that if she could find other children to make it worthwhile, she would ask the rector if she could use the parish hall to run the kindergarten. Sufficient children were found and she started the first kindergarten in Kalamunda.

George and Alma Schmitt with family, back row L-R Alma, George, Georgina front row, L-R Ella, Edward, Joy. Taken at Headingley Road, Kalamunda, circa 1940



Original home (right) and newly built 2nd home (left) of George and Alma Schmitt, Headingley Road, circa 1951





Mr and Mrs George Schmitt, Joy, Edward and Ella, circa 1942



L-R: Ella Schmitt, Dorothy Dennerly with the Girl Guides, circa 1946

Childhood years

Ella attended Kalamunda Primary School where there were only three classrooms, two of them are now on display at the Kalamunda History Village. During World War II many children were evacuated to Kalamunda because authorities thought that Perth would be bombed at any time. This caused overcrowding at the school so school hours were staggered and the old shed was used as a classroom to accommodate the additional children. Two teachers taught in each room with one class facing one way and the other class facing the other.

During the forties, over a three year period, the Schmitts housed around 100 English sailors whilst they were in Perth on shore leave. Some of them were as young as 16 years of age and far from home.

As children, walks with friends and in family groups on hot summer nights were favourite pastimes. They also had fun listening to the serials on the radio, making patterns out of pebbles and gravel, making daisy chains, mucking around in the creek, playing in the clay pits in Gooseberry Hill and using Mr William's dairy as a playground. Ella joined the Girl Guides and was a part of the Anglican Church.

The children had to help with chores and would feed the chooks, bring in the eggs and get the morning wood. Ella worked part time (weekends) as a junior shop girl at Kash and Karry while still at school.

English sailors, rescued after 8 days on a life raft, stayed with the Williams family at the Kalamunda dairy. L-R: Joy Schmitt, Roy Nile, Verna Roads, Ted Wise, Neville Tilley Front: Ross Williams, Ella Schmitt, Edward Schmitt





Location: Kalamunda Circa. 1955 three ladies, names unknown. Source: H Honnor

Community life

Kalamunda residents attended the local parish hall for supper dance nights. The Swanee River dance music was broadcast from the Government House ballroom and residents danced to the music on the radio. Until 9pm, when the radio broadcast started, Ella's father played the piano with Bill King on the accordion. Attendees danced to that music until the broadcast started then they stoked up the old wireless and danced to that.

Ella's mother would bake around 100 sausage rolls for the supper dance nights using the parish hall's tiny kitchen. Cooking on the wood stove would really heat up the hall especially on hot summer nights but the people used to crowd in there.

The Agricultural Hall housed many social events with Saturday night dances and picture shows. Dances finished strictly at midnight under the direction of Mr and Mrs Bill Wright who were the caretakers in those days. On one or two occasions it's was claimed that Mrs Wright slammed the piano lid on the pianist's fingers when he refused to stop playing at midnight.

The Show Ball was a major event where ladies wore their long evening dresses, flowers in the hair and all the trimmings.

The first Kalamunda debutantes ball was held around 1947 and Carols by Candlelight was introduced in 1953.



Ella and Dennis Byett (nee Schmitt) wedding day , 27/04/1957



George and Alma Schmitt 27/04/1957

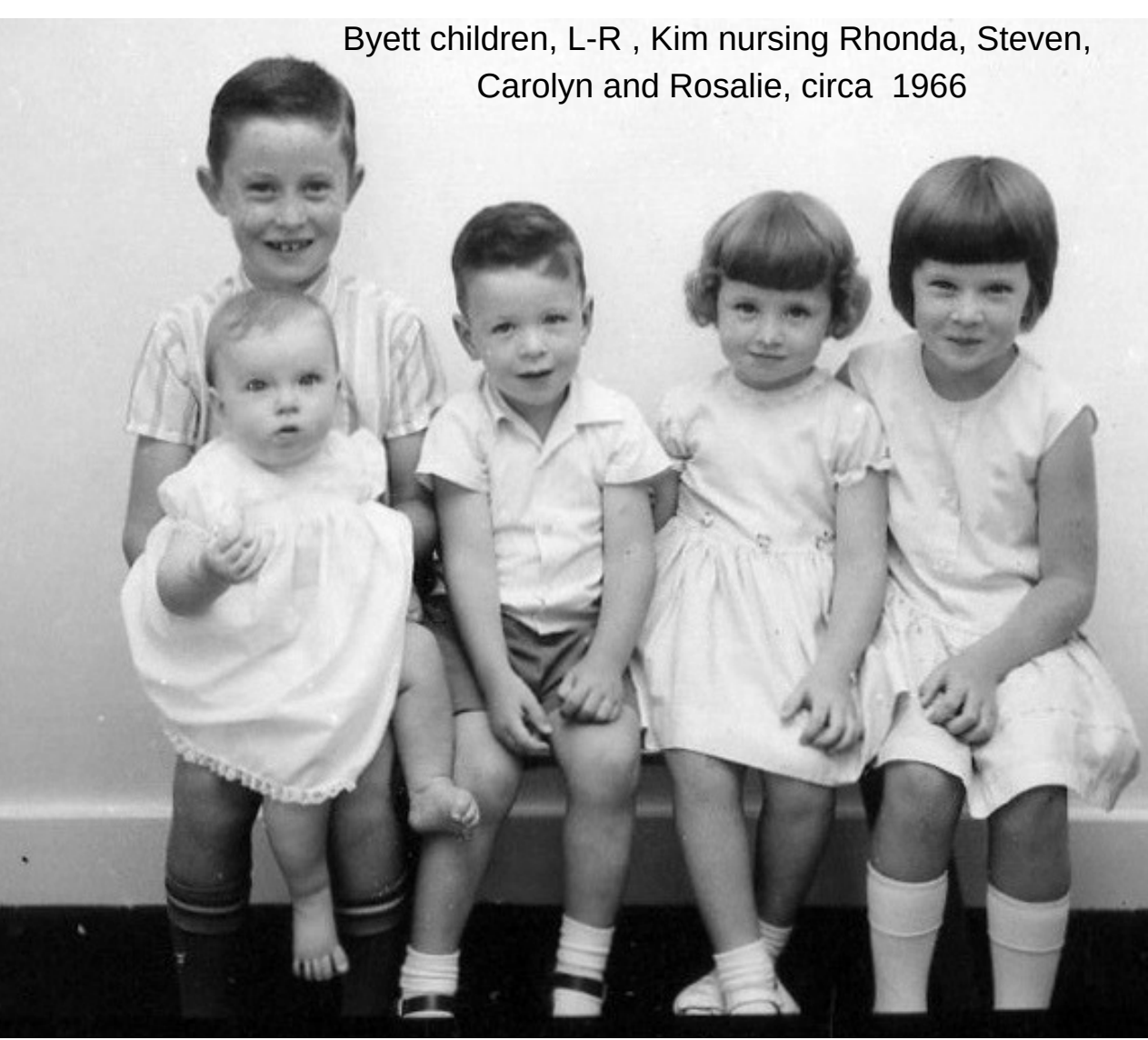
Marriage and Children

Ella met Dennis Byett through the church's youth fellowship in 1949. He had recently migrated to Australia with his parents from Oxford in England.

Following their marriage at St Barnabas Church in Kalamunda on the 27 April 1957 Ella and Dennis lived in a caravan in different places around Kalamunda. They embarked on a working holiday and travelled across the Nullabour to Adelaide towing their caravan. It was a difficult trip that took ten days, travelling a thousand miles of corrugated road that claimed six blown tyres and split wheel rims. It was a sad sight that limped into Adelaide. They had their first baby in Adelaide, before moving on to work in Canberra.

They moved back to Western Australia and when the second baby was on the way they bought Ella's grandmother's house in Victoria Park. They stayed there for six years before moving back to Kalamunda where Ella's father had given her a block of land for her 21st birthday

Ella and Dennis had five children – Kim, Rosalie, Caroline, Steven and Rhonda.



Byett children, L-R , Kim nursing Rhonda, Steven, Carolyn and Rosalie, circa 1966



Byett family, Back L-R , Kim, Steven, Michael (Trivett), Denis
Front: Karen, Carolyn, Rhonda, Rosalie (Trivett), Ella, circa early 1980's



Schmitt family reunion, Jorgensen Park, circa 1983

Family History and Reunion

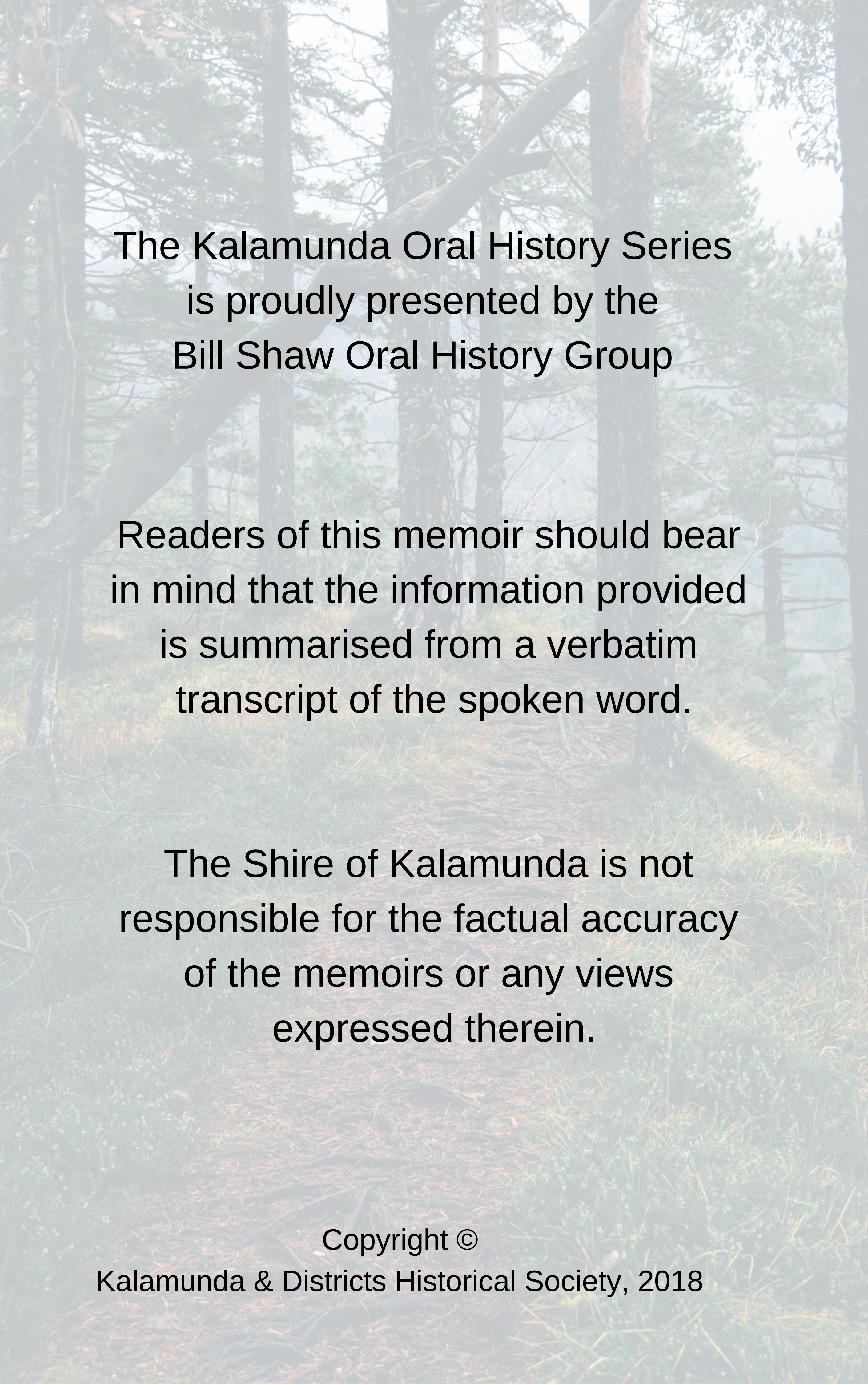
Following a serious illness Ella decided to write a family history about Jacob Schmitt.

In 1982 she went to Melbourne with Dennis and started in earnest to conduct research about Jacob. They visited the Latrobe Library to find out where he had lived. They travelled on to Adelaide to check shipping lists to find out when he came from England to South Australia. When returning to Perth they spent countless hours conducting research in the Battye Library.

Ella's cousin, George McLean, provided old photographs, a bible given to Jacob by his family in England and marriage certificates.

Ella's research and memorabilia was used to write the Schmitt Family History.

In 1983 they held a Schmitt family reunion in Jorgensen Park, Kalamunda



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