

Hazel Barnard happily waves from her new home, the tent beside the track at Weismantels, in late 1948. The kitchen is beside the small tent with its prominent chimney. BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION

JOHN AND HAZEL BARNARD:

their tent years at Weismantels

Kathryn White

John and Hazel Barnard (née Chirgwin) were married in their mid-twenties, on 7 August 1948 at Hurstville NSW, having previously become engaged in 1947. My father had always been known as 'John' this being his mother's choice of name and was known as such, until he found out that his father had registered his choice of name, on his birth certificate. Thus it was in later years when he required his birth certificate that he found out that he was really a 'William Charles Barnard' which was to say the least, quite a surprise. By this time, 'John' had stuck! But his official records were under his "new found" legal name.

My father and mother had met at Carlton (in Sydney, NSW) in the early 1940s when my father was at that time working in a butcher's shop and my mother was working as a secretary in a real estate agency across the road. The shopping centre was located next to Carlton Station. My father decided to join the railways for a more secure position.

John Barnard commenced service in the NSW Department of Railways on 29 June 1942 as a junior porter at Cronulla and became interested in training as a signalman. In those days an opportunity to begin to 'climb the ladder' in grades as a signalman, could be had if you were prepared to do country service.

Newly engaged, they decided they would begin their married life in the country, so John applied and commenced duty at Weismantels in 1947, as a Seventh Grade Signalman, on the North Coast Line. Weismantels, opened in March

1934, approximately 280km from Sydney Terminal Station between Dungog and Gloucester. According to NSWRail.net records, two other signalmen were stationed there and Dad was to join them.

My mother remained with her parents at Hurstville and was preparing for their wedding. Friends donated their ration coupons towards her wedding dress material, as at this time rationing just after WW II was still in existence. Her mother made the wedding cake, also with the aid of coupons from friends as gifts for the bride! My grandmother on the Barnard side (by then a widow) owned a florist shop in Carlton and gave all the floral arrangements for their wedding day.

STARTING AT WEISMANTELS

Upon arrival at Weismantels, Dad was living temporarily in the 'bachelors' quarters', which comprised a single primitive-looking canvas tent near the signal box. Dad kept a pet ferret to help him hunt rabbits. The engaged couple corresponded regularly and my mother used to give train drivers at Central Station some hot chips wrapped in newspaper, kept warm in the engine, then into a canvas bag and dropped at Weismantels as "special delivery" so my mother told me. My father would say: "they were still hot, too!"

My mother described in a letter to me (as she had recently found the photo and had sent me a copy) that the above



John Barnard's tent at Weismantels when he was first posted there in 1947. The ferret cage is at the right of the tent, with the "primitive cooking area" further to the right.

BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION, COURTESY KATHRYN WHITE

is the 'original tent accommodation in 1947' supplied by the railway department for my father as a bachelor and was the only accommodation available to him. Built behind the Weismantels signal box and on the right of the 'Ritz' (as Mum named it), there was a primitive cooking area. The ferret lived in the cage next to it near the entrance of the tent. On the left of the picture, the 'blanket' is drying. This was an old Army overcoat bought at a disposal store for 2s 6d. Inside the tent was a tea chest which contained all of Dad's worldly goods.

A single bed completed the 'accommodation'. One of the signalmen at Weismantels, a practical joker, curled a dead snake on the end of his bed on the 'blanket', so when Dad awoke he saw it there and broke into a sweat! But it did not move at all and so he realised he had been 'had'. Dad jumped up and laughter from his new companions broke into the air! Needless to say, in time, Dad also added his own practical jokes in return, although all in good fun. And by the look of things, he needed that 'woman's touch' for domestic arrangements at Weismantels.

MARRIED LIFE IN THE TENT

Thankfully better accommodation was prepared for the new bride in the form of a part wooden cabin/ part canvas tent 'set-up' near the signal box and railway line, so at long last the 'bachelors' quarters' could be abandoned. At their wedding in 1948, my uncle said in good humour that my mother had waited for her "knight in shining armour" who was now going to carry her off on his charger to his ... TENT! And when they arrived by steam train after their honeymoon, apart from a warm welcome there was a sign waiting for them, with decorated bunting on their tent which said: "Welcome to the Love Nest".

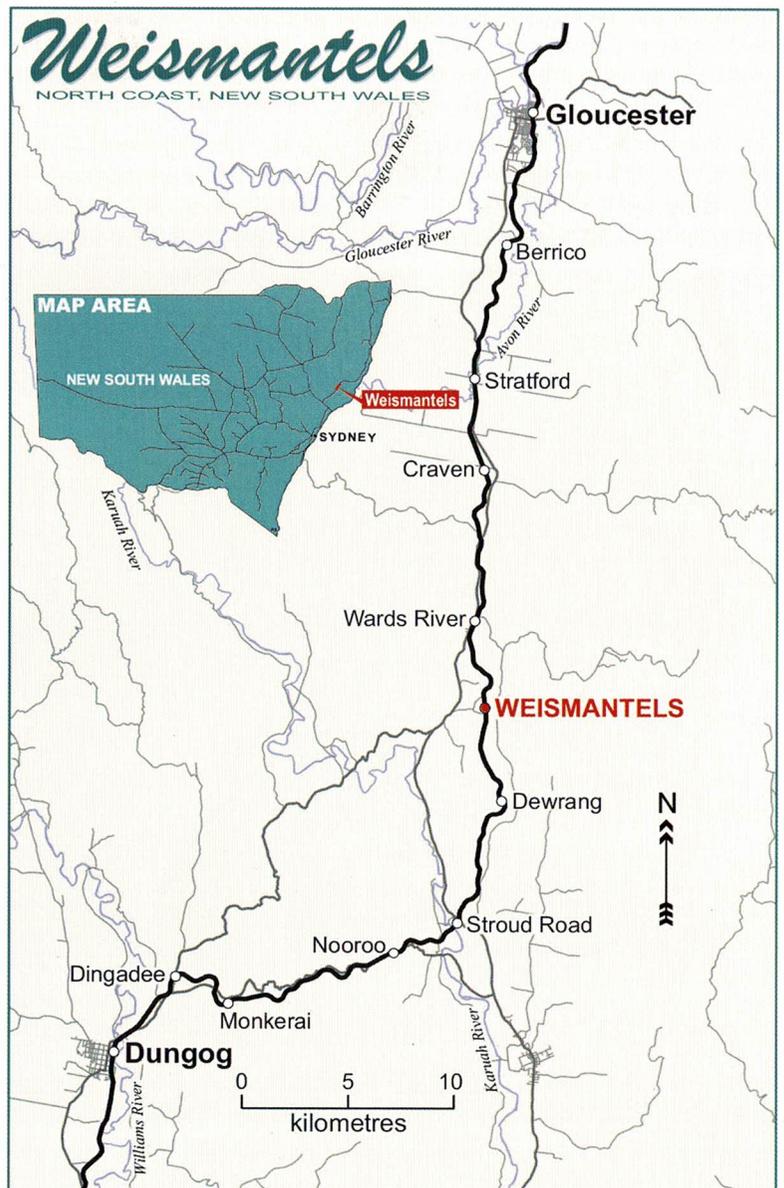
My mother was a 'city girl' young and in good health (like my father) with a happy nature and bright outlook, ready for new horizons and she always told me those early years were her happiest

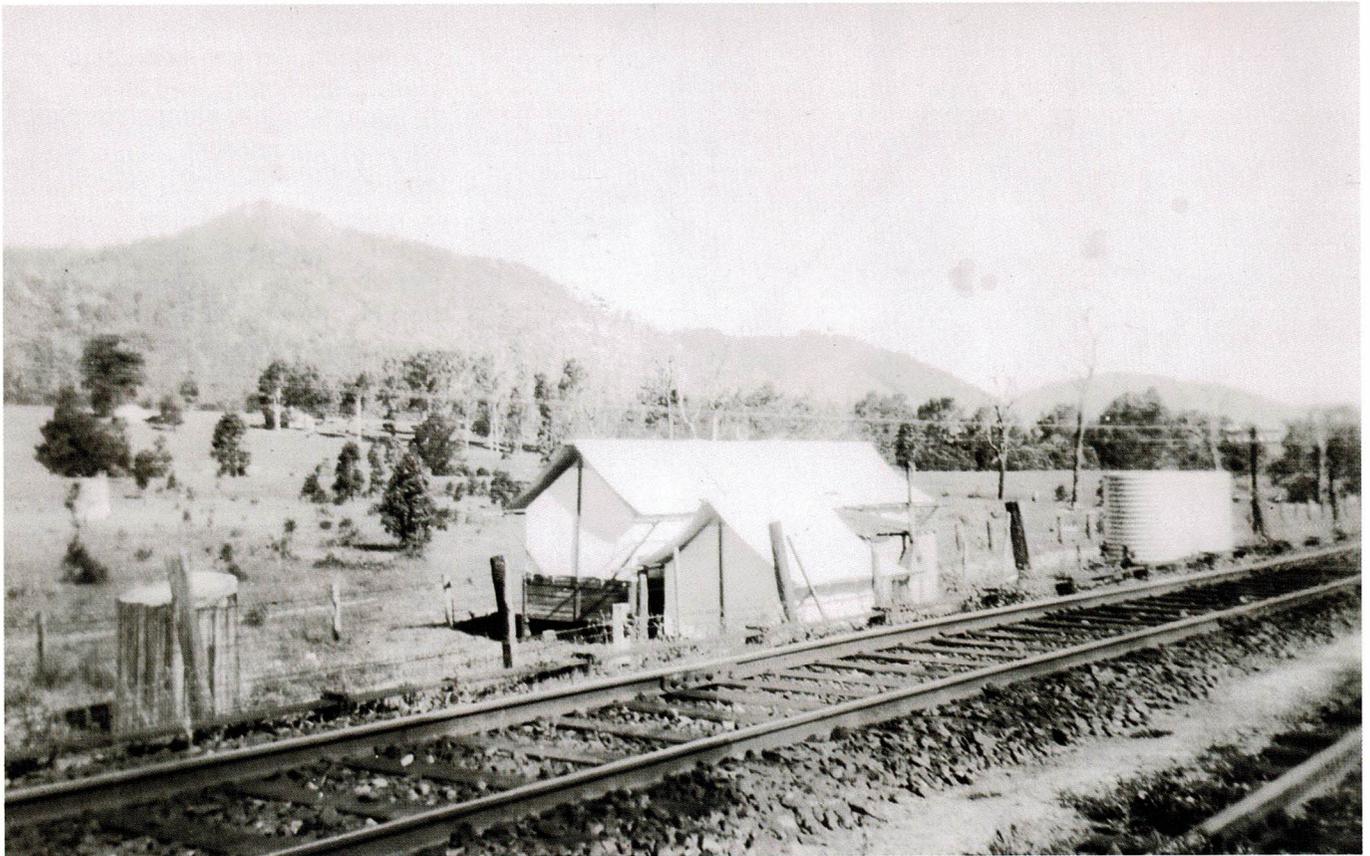
in their tent.

I have grown up with stories of those years and many and varied they are. I too have a love of steam trains and railway yarns, just like my Dad and Mum. My first home was also the TENT though too young for personal memories. My parents were great storytellers and I remember my mother's laughter after the stories were told again with fresh vigour, as if only yesterday. Of course my stories are mainly from what my parents have told me and the minute details such as signal box details or conditions of employment, etc, at Weismantels, would require another research project.

'The Tent', being situated right next to the North Coast Railway Line, the various express passenger trains and goods trains thundering so close, must have taken a little adjustment I imagine.

There apparently was some form of divided rooms within the tent, created with the aid of decorative curtains my mother made; while visitor's accommodation was available





The location of the Barnard's tent beside the North Coast Railway tracks at Weismantels is evident in this photo. The two water tanks were replenished by the Railways Department as required, and the toilet is in the left foreground. BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION

also in a smaller tent behind the main one, and next to the kitchen section with chimney.

As there was no electricity for light,

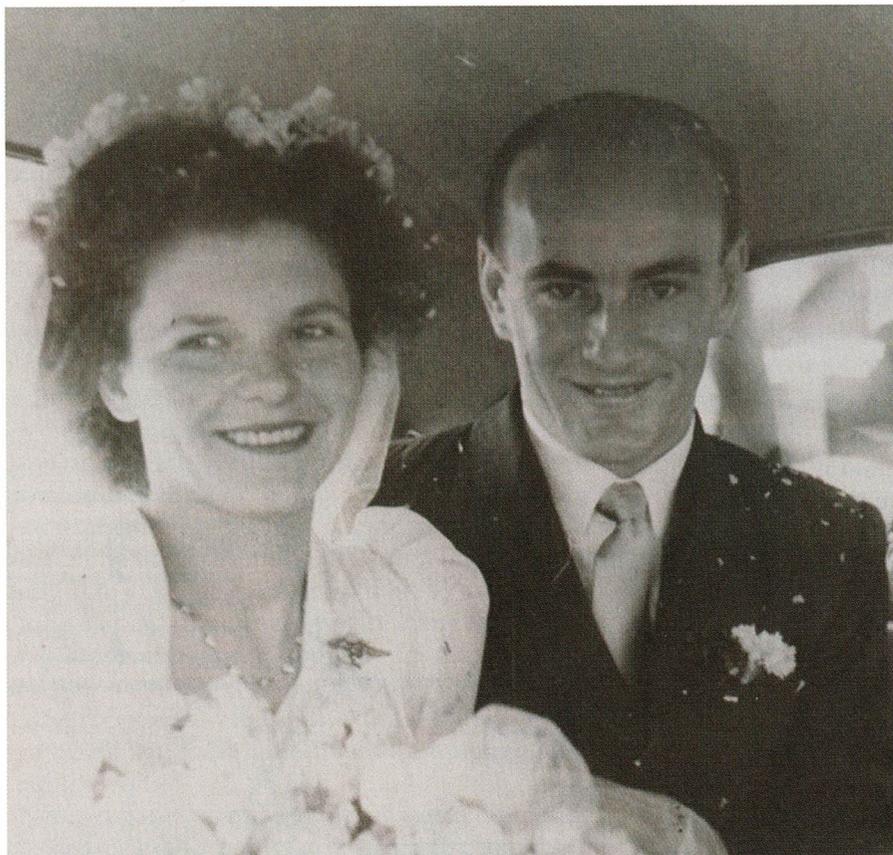
kerosene lamps were lit at night.

There was a record-player that looked like a suitcase that you opened and wound-up in order to play a 78rpm

record. A collection of popular music of the times was played on this machine. Dad also had a 'cat's whisker' crystal radio set to tune into stations. Mum missed her piano, which she had played back at Hurstville, but "made do" as she always said.

My adventurous grandfather could not resist visiting with my grandmother. Pop Chirgwin did everything he could while at Weismantels, from fishing, shooting rabbits, playing tennis on the court next to the signal box and climbing the mountain nearby, to a cave that could only be seen at certain times of the day when the sun shone in a certain place. There were legends that this was a bushranger's hideout with the name of 'Captain Thunderbolt', which I thought when young, sounded like a possible candidate for the Sunday comic strips of the mid-1950s.

So on Dad's day off, the two men set out with a haversack of refreshments. The cave proved to be a tad further than it looked to be and they found it to be bat-ridden. Home later than expected to worried women-folk, not too many cave-finding expeditions occurred after this initial experience. My grandmother, much more sedate, was just content to be quietly visiting her daughter and later her new baby



Hazel and John Barnard on their wedding day in Hurstville in 1948. Hazel would soon experience a very different community and life-style. BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION

granddaughter, and enjoying helping with the daily chores.

My mother spoke lovingly of her old-fashioned cast iron fuel stove housed with an attached exterior pipe for the smoke outlet under a corrugated-iron roof section. She kept the stove pristine by polishing it with a black polish regularly and always said that her baked dinners and scones were the best she had ever cooked. No electric or gas stove she ever owned afterwards, could come up to the standard of this ancient marvel.

Dad chopped wood nearby to keep the 'home fires burning'; for on the colder nights it was a popular place to be where my father played his harmonica and stories were told. His favourite tune he played for Mum, even until recent years, was the 1937 song *When It's Springtime in the Rockies*. Nearby tanks held water; while the toilet facilities were the famous 'dunnies' outside the tent. If toilet paper ran out, Dad said with a grin: "there was always the newspaper". I thought that newspaper was used only for the fish and chips you bought at the shops! I told Dad to which he gave his hearty chuckle. I always got: "you are far too soft!"

My mother did have one 'disaster', however, on the fuel stove. This was when she made some stick-jaw toffee from a recipe book for the first time and offered some to another worker who was passing by. She was a little upset he had not said "thank you" after he tried the toffee and just left without a word. My father then came in and announced: "Any wonder! H..... was trying to get his false teeth apart at



An unidentified railway fettler, Frank ('Pop') Chirgwin and John Barnard about to set off from Weismantels on another adventure. BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION

the water tank!" Yes, it certainly was a 'successful' batch of stick-jaw toffee!

Another time Mum had some ordered Epsom salts which arrived by train in a brown paper bag. My father was having problems with constipation, and it was suggested as a remedy, but with no instructions. Not knowing what dose to give, she later found it was enough "to kill a horse"; and as a result, my father was sitting on the toilet between trains and guzzling water for a week, but as my mother said: "at least he was cured!" This story turned up on the radio program *Australia All Over* one Sunday morning many years later and my mother could not believe that another railwayman of the time still remembered what had happened. But once again, her laughter rang out at the memory, but Dad for some strange

reason, just gave me one of his 'not funny' looks!

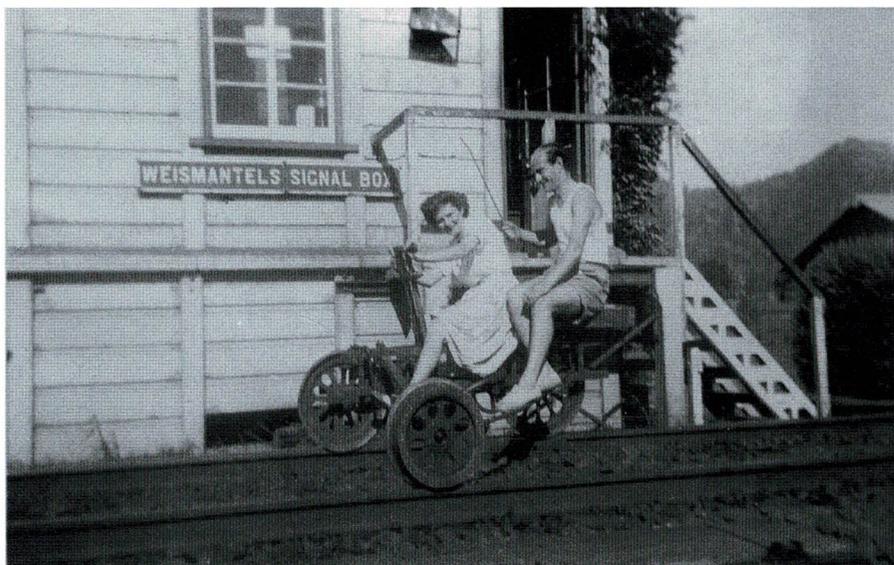
THE RAILWAY COMMUNITY

Despite their location, Mum and Dad were not really isolated. The other ladies who had railway working husbands would add a 'little civilisation' to their surroundings by having the best tablecloths spread for morning tea parties on occasion with an opportunity for a 'chin wag'.

There were also comings and goings on the small platform at Weismantels Siding. Dad had an extra duty as a postman where items were sent and collected in a locked bag and distributed by him at the signal box. My father was very proficient in first-aid all his life, due to his early training as a signaller which was a requirement in those days and came in handy even during later years, when he managed to save a life before an ambulance arrived.

In the wider circle of the community, there were also the barn dances which my parents relished as entertainment and great fun if it were not Dad's turn for signaller duty. How did you know a barn dance was on? A man on horseback rode by, stopped briefly playing a fiddle to let you know when and galloped off to the next location!

Boredom never seemed to enter the equation. For picnics Dad and Mum went on the railway trike to Wards River when trains were not due for some time, although I believe 'picnics' were not on the official list of duties for a trike ride!



John and Hazel Barnard on a trike beside the Weismantels Signal Box, with John pretending to 'whip' Hazel into action in the summer of 1948. BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION

THE BIG WET

It was not always ‘roses and sunshine’ in the tent: there were the memorable floods of June 1949 and September 1950 when Mum and Dad were at Weismantels. Weeks before I was born, my mother had gone to stay with her parents at Hurstville, as she was booked in at Crown Street Women’s Hospital in Sydney. She had travelled by train to Sydney every few months to see a specialist in Macquarie Street beforehand and I just happened to be born at the time of the worst floods in NSW history.

To give an idea one paper stated: ‘Sydney, June 19th 1949’:

Seven persons are dead (drowned) and at least 25,000 homeless in one of the most disastrous floods New South Wales has ever experienced. Town halls, court offices, other public halls and any big buildings capable of accommodating people have been turned into refuge centres for the evacuated homeless in the northern towns. Maitland authorities today commandeered a quantity of milk, fruit, vegetables, fish and other food which was in trucks at Maitland railway station just as flood waters were entering the trucks which later in the day submerged. With vast areas of the northern dairy country cut off, the milk supplies reaching Sydney today are only one-third of normal requirements. There has been no express train service between Sydney and Brisbane since Thursday night. In some districts the week’s rainfall has been as high as 16 inches. In Sydney almost 12 inches fell between last Monday and this afternoon, when the sun appeared briefly for the first time for



A tennis court at Weismantels contributed to the social activities of the railway people based there. Here John Barnard posed at the signal box ready for a game of tennis.

BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION

The Power House Museum quotes that according to the railways’ 1945 *Book of Rules and Regulations*:

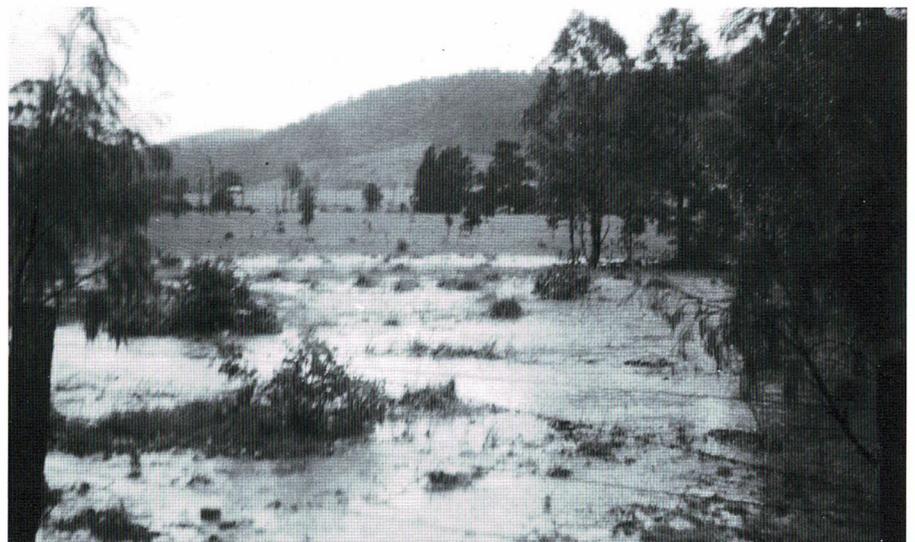
An employee must not use a tricycle unless he can read and write, and has in his possession a watch which shows the correct railway time, a copy of the last issue of the Working Timetable corrected to date and applying to the District in which the tricycle is being used.

It is also noted it was “well known” that trikes were also used for personal travel by railway employees to dances for example, or in this case ... picnics!

Because I have always associated Weismantels as my first home too, I looked up a little history of the original family to settle in the area. The first Weismantel family members had arrived in Port Jackson in 1852, being Richard and Catherine who had emigrated from Winkel in Germany. The name itself translates into English as ‘White Cloak’ and the Weismantel family bought land in the area from around 1863. The railway line obviously went through their land. I thought this English translation most appropriate, for in a way, the tent was like a ‘white cloak’ at the time; as Dad said that “it kept the rain out”! There were also Weismantel family descendants still

living nearby in the late 1940s and early 1950s as their farm also sold produce and my mother said they visited the family regularly as they were not too distant from the tent.

My mother said there some unwelcome visitors that came to the Weismantels tents too, namely live snakes (this time) with an accompanying scream from the ladies that could be heard miles away, the men of course coming to the rescue. Dad killed one snake under these circumstances and to Mum he became “my hero!” thereafter.



A photograph of paddocks at Weismantels during the 1949–1950 floods from the Barnard’s back fence. BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION



A double family celebration: John (right) and Hazel with daughter Kathryn are joined by Hazel's brother Stan Bryant (left) and his wife Gwen with their daughter—Kathryn's 'twin cousin' Leila—born two days after Kathryn, at the Bryant home in Sydney during July 1949 before their return to Weismantels. Photographs of John in a suit are rare. BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION

a week. A rainfall record for June for Sydney of 1231 points was reached to-day.¹

My father, having been notified by phone in the signal box that Mum had delivered their first born, a daughter and both doing well, was determined to come to Sydney and was given leave. He could not come by train, but hitchhiked his way along roads in trucks and managed to get to Sydney safely and, in time, all three were home again safe and sound at Weismantels.

The new nickname for the family unit Mum said was “We Three” ... thereafter during those years, until such time as my only brother John was born, ten years later! My mother kept in her large camphor box, the total bill from the Macquarie Street specialist and receipt for her confinement. It cost Dad £15 15s all up! And he paid it within a month of receiving the bill. This must have been a large amount for a signalman but it makes me proud to think: “nothing but the best for Hazel”. This was his attitude all their married life.

SOME ADVENTURES

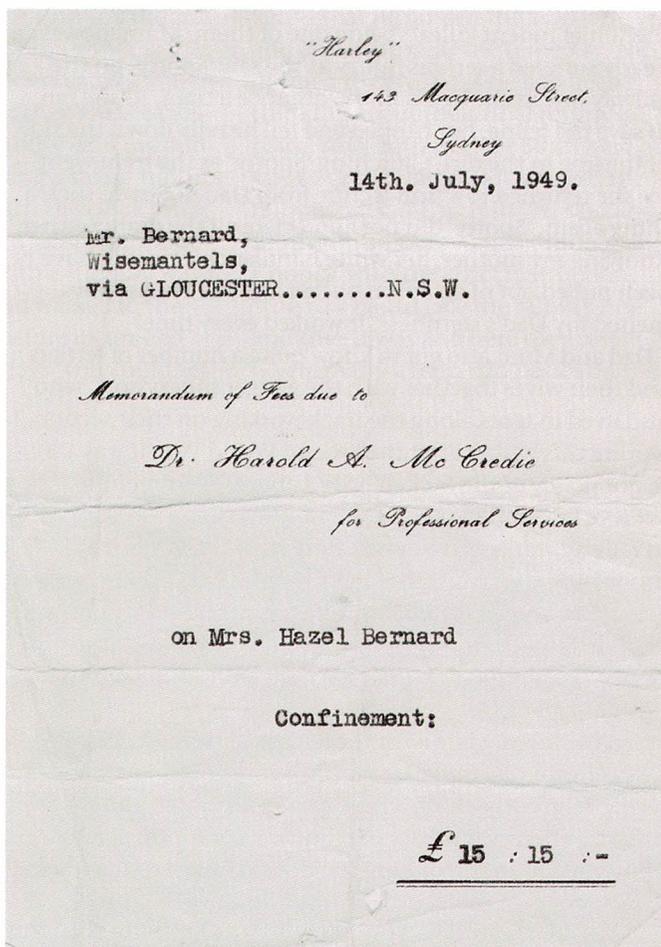
In those days, it was a much more relaxed style regarding living “by the rules”. There was a lot of railway camaraderie

in those days. Dad had “an arrangement” with drivers of a particular train to slow right down at the Weismantels signal box so he could run and jump near the door of the last carriage which could be opened and Dad climbed aboard. This arrangement worked well except for one occasion when the door would not open and Dad could not get in. So he held held on to support rails as the train travelled along the track and through tunnels,, until it passed one station where a signalman spotted him clinging on and raised the alarm, so the train briefly did an unscheduled stop and Dad literally “fell into the carriage”.

And as far as travelling goes, there were times when they had their railway holiday break and they usually went back to Hurstville by train to my grandparents' home and from there visited friends, went on outings, visited other relatives, etc. Mum even got to play her piano again, her favourite being *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*.

One of the visits at this time was to Mum's bridesmaid, Joan, who told me on my parent's 50th wedding anniversary that she was so pleased to see my mother again as she had been worrying about her living accommodation. From her own comfortable brick home, Joan could not imagine living in a tent next to a railway line. She must have compared it in her mind to church missionaries going to remote lands, which their mutual church supported.

As for my mother, I am sure she would have assured Joan that in life, you have to “keep your sunny side up”, have faith and if you are with loved ones, you can make anything work. Besides, she really did enjoy her tent!



The invoice (shown here) and receipt for Hazel's confinement in July 1949 were kept by her parents. BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION



The cabins that replaced the tent accommodation in 1950. 'We Three' lived in the first cabin in this photograph, with the signal box in the background. BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION

Apart from the pet ferrets kept in a separate enclosure—which Dad liked and Mum did not—they both enjoyed a pet cat or two whilst they were living in the tent, 'Spotty', the "chief rodent killer", being one of them. Mum, however, nearly suffered a serious injury as she saw 'Spotty' on the railway line as she heard in the distance a train, so she ran to save the feline, but tripped and fell heavily down the side of the line in the dirt. Clutching 'Spotty' as the train went by, she returned to a firm lecture from Dad not to do such a thing again. 'Spotty' did not appreciate all the drama either. Knowing my mother, her white handkerchief would have been pulled out of an apron pocket and her tears always melted my Dad's sternness. It worked every time!

Dad and Mum also got to know quite a number of fettlers and their wives together with the ganger supervisors, who also lived in tents along the track working on their section. During this period after the Second World War, it was a major policy of the McKell NSW Labor Government to achieve full employment again, so there was a rapid increase in railway workers. It was certainly a labour-intensive job for those fettlers who kept the tracks in order on a daily basis. Dad had a special regard for them for he said they were "true battlers" and "tough workers" with hammers "as big as beer barrels" to work with which weighed around 16 pounds [about 7kg]!

Dad got to associate with the fettlers personally, as they too, collected their mail from the signal box. Some were recent migrants getting a new start in a new land after the war. There was plenty of manual work for them and Aboriginal fettlers repairing the flood damage to the tracks. For example, in the Maitland area over the two years of floods, some houses had been flooded seven times! Such was the scale of the disaster.

AN UPGRADED HOME!

Sometime in the early 1950s, the tent was dismantled and replaced by cabins. My mother said she cried for the tent that was "her home" but the cabin was an improvement just the same. Then the second flood occurred in September 1950 and "We Three" were cut off by the flood waters rising in the river systems. This included the nearby 'Mammy Johnsons River' named after a 19th century Aboriginal midwife who had greatly assisted pioneer women, but sadly drowned in the river whilst travelling to attend a squatter's wife. The floods continued to rise along the North Coast line. Mum had missed the 1949 flood as she had been in Sydney with her parents prior to my birth, but not this time.

Our shopping orders came by train from the major townships, Gloucester or Dungog when Mum and Dad did not go to the towns by train. They phoned their order from the signal box and the shopkeeper would take the goods to the local station for a train delivery as a service to railway employees. This proved timely as Mum ordered a large order of baby food and other items for she told me she had had a premonition about being cut off by the flood waters as already the rain was pounding, which to her "sounded like flood rain".

The shopkeeper thought this was unnecessary but Mum was listening to her instincts and sure enough, they were cut off for some time soon after, for the train that brought the goods was one of the last to get through. As Dad said: "with one bullet left to shoot a rabbit", everything was running out, when they heard a "cockle-doodle-do" train whistle shrilling loudly and repeatedly. It was the first train to come through after the flood, with a joyful "welcoming commit

tee” to greet it. To add to this, Dad mentioned that it had been ‘stand-down’ for signalmen at the time to add to their worries until the trains operated again. And they were paid by train.

As it happened coincidentally the ‘pay-master’, who handed out the pay from the train carriage especially adapted for the task at various stations and platforms along the way, also retired near where Dad lived for many years. They took up many a yarn about the “good old days” of the 1940s and 1950s. Dad’s friend still managed to live next to a railway line even in retirement years.

“We Three” left Weismantels in 1951, so my father had been there for four years and my mother for three years, while I was two years old. Dad eventually occupied the position of Fourth Class Signalman at Chullora and he was able to build our first family home. In addition he gained a satisfactory knowledge of first-aid and station management, as well as shunting and guard’s duties. He also passed a written examination in Sections 1 and 2 of Coaching Accounts (Modified Standard) after 22 years of service.²

RETIREMENT

Dad and Mum moved to Kiama in the early 1970s and eventually opened a butcher’s shop there. How the circle had turned and signal boxes were closing down! Their shop was very successful with my mother as the shop assistant until their retirement years. She was known for her happy disposition and laughter! It was named ‘Little Blowhole Butchery’ and, because Dad was a Justice of the Peace (JP) he had to put a sign up in the shop with his ‘legal name’—William Charles Barnard. Accordingly, at Kiama where they had moved, he became known as ‘Bill’! His father had won this round after all!

An era had passed, for with a heavy heart Dad revisited Weismantels with my only brother John (born 10 years after our tent experience) when he found the signal box sadly demolished with only a concrete slab remaining. Modern trains went by still, but the familiar mountain ranges were there to welcome him. He silently stared

RIGHT: John Barnard stands on the foundations of the Weismantels Signal Box during his nostalgic return to the site with his son John. The familiar mountain range stands in the background . BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION

for a time my brother said, no doubt rekindling memories of those early years of married life in “the Tent”. Weismantels had been closed as a siding on 29 June 1975.

From his home at Kiama, Dad could see the trains on the South Coast Line near Easts Beach and when the first electric train arrived at Kiama Station in November 2001, as an interchange station for electric services from Sydney (and then diesel services to Bomaderry) there he was to greet it with a railway hat (that looked a tad American) and steam train pins stuck onto it. Dad was part of the history of Australian railways again and never lost his love for steam trains either.

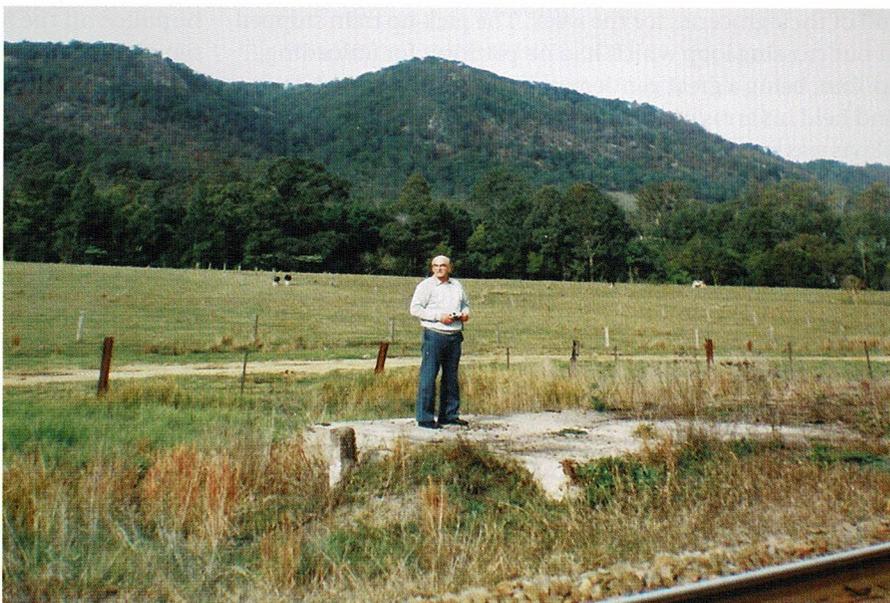
On a Sunday when I visited their home in recent years, our treat together was to watch ‘Steam Train’ videos. Why he even could tell what grade of coal was used by the colour of the smoke! Steam trains also are ‘in my blood’ and in the 1950s, I have fond memories of carriages with marvelously comfortable seats and glass decanters for cool water drinks, ornate racks above for luggage, the click-clack of the wheels and the motion of the train, the train whistle with its mournful sound and making sure you did not stick your head out of the window in case some smoke cinders caught you in the eye! As Dad said “they are the closest thing to living things” and I would have to agree. Catching a steam train at Central Station with the clock tower and steam hissing is a fond childhood memory, together with a friendly wave from the driver as you walked to the engine at the front before its time to leave. And in those days, you could set

your watch by a train timetable. That my Dad helped in making sure trains arrived safely was a connection always for me, to those railway years.

Dad and Mum were married for 63 years when my mother passed away in 2012. My Dad was a robust man who still did the cooking, lawn mowing, gardening, shopping, etc, as Mum’s health was not as robust as his. Yet within 100 days, he passed away too. Their headstone reads: “Together Forever”. They had both lived to their late 80s and were great-grandparents by this time. But before Dad passed away, he dictated a few Weismantel yarns to me, a few of which follow.

But, even their final resting place has a railway story for Kiama General Cemetery faces the South Coast Railway line near Bombo Station as well as Bombo Beach and the Kiama Lighthouse area. For it was a very unusual story indeed.

Dad went to buy Mum her yearly woollen handmade socks at Gerringong and decided to buy a “bottle of lemonade” for her, but on the way back was so unimpressed by the cost—“a man could have bought three large bottles at the supermarket”—that he missed the turn-off and ended up near the cemetery. He decided to drive in as he had been thinking about their final resting place, now both in their 80s. There he saw rows that faced east towards the railway track. “This is it!” he said and soon after went to Kiama Municipal Council with the strict instruction “the row has to face the railway line” and thus it was and here they rest where many a train still passes by.





In this circa 1959 scene taken from a passenger train in Weismantels loop, diesel-electric locomotive 4301 passes the signal box with one of the staff cabins in the foreground. A short platform had been added to the signal box, while washing dries on the clothes line.

G W LILICO COLLECTION, ARHSNSW RRC ARCHIVES, 039201

JOHN BARNARD'S YARNS

The shopping spree

We used to go into Gloucester, which was about 10 miles away, to do our shopping. But the only way there was by a pick-up train. This was a train that used to stop at every nook and cranny along the line, to pick up goods, people, etc. So this was our only means of shopping by ourselves.

Now coming home one particular day, the ganger Tom and his wife Mavis had been to Gloucester shopping and his wife had a big paper bag, which they used to give you those days, full of their groceries for the week. The pick-up train stopped at our crossing loop which had no platform for unloading, so Tom, being a great gentleman that he was, jumped down and held his arms up and beckoned Mavis to jump! Now Mavis was no small girl, she had a bit of weight about her and trying to balance a bag full of goodies under her arm and jumped! But the problem was she jumped and straddled Tom around his neck. Tom went backwards with her on top, down the bank together. His arms were like a helicopter blade, they were fanning the air, the large paper bag with the groceries burst, broken eggs, spilt tea, rolling oranges, milk and bread all went with them.

When Tom eventually got to his feet, I can't tell you the words he called Mavis. But it would make a bullock teamster driver sound like a Sunday school teacher. Tom was a pretty tough sort of a bloke, because you had to be in those days, he got over it alright, but I don't think Mavis would ever do that again, I'm sure!

The Streaker!

This was at the same crossing loop around about the same time too, the early 1950s. As it happened, it was a very, very hot day—it must have been touching the 100s in the old Fahrenheit scale. In those days, the ladies used to have a get together, a cup of tea and scones on the lawn, between the cabins and the signal box near the railway line. They used to meet once a week on a Saturday and chat away like women do. As I said, it was a hot day and Mick (I won't tell you his second name) was the signalman in charge of the signal box. He had about 20 minutes to wait for the next train, so he pulled off the full road, the Distant, Home and Starting signals, hung the staff on the telephone where we used to always hang it, ready to exchange as the train went past.

So having a little bit of a break, Mick decided to duck down to the swimming hole, which was part of the creek there, about 220 yards from the signal box. Up in the North Coast with no-one about, you went 'skinny-dipping', so Mick went in.

Some local lads there having a joke, pinched his shorts and clothes. Mick got out of the swimming hole, could hear the train in the distance. He looked around for his shorts and clothes but could not find them. As he had a full road pulled off with staff ready for exchange, he had no choice but to tear back to the signal box 'full Monty'! He rushed past the ladies, still outside enjoying their tea and scones. With the initial shock seeing 'Mick the Streaker', one of the ladies collapsed, the ganger's wife said she married the wrong man and the others just screamed!

But apart from that, he got back just as the train arrived and rushed out and exchanged the staff. The fireman nearly fell off the footplate and the engine driver let out two big whistles “wha-oooooooo”; “wha-oooooo”.

I don't think Mick thought this was much of a joke and for weeks and weeks he was looking for those guys who pinched his shorts and clothes. If he had got hold of them, I don't know what he would have done!

Believe it or not!

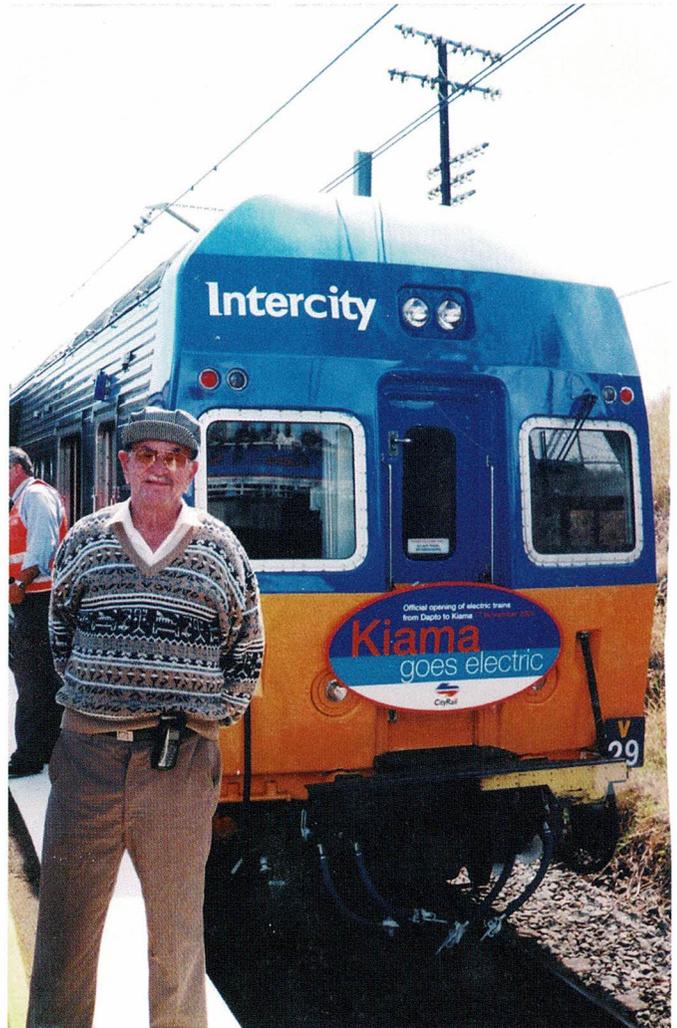
Several years later, I was in charge of a signal box in the Sydney Metropolitan area where facilities were available at sidings to stow empty train carriages. This particular night, we had to stow the empty train carriages in number one south siding. These are controlled by a ball-lever held over to enable the points to be changed for the train to enter number one siding.

There was a thunderstorm that night and the guard from the train was sitting on the ball-lever waving this train back into the siding. Everything was going well, until suddenly around 9.20pm, a lightning strike hit the stanchion alongside where the guard was sitting on the points. Next thing a huge arc went from the stanchion to the ground frame where he was sitting. The guard leapt into the air and took off in a panic as you can imagine but the lever went back to normal and not being held down, changed the points under the first carriage and the engine. So it derailed and went over in the dirt.

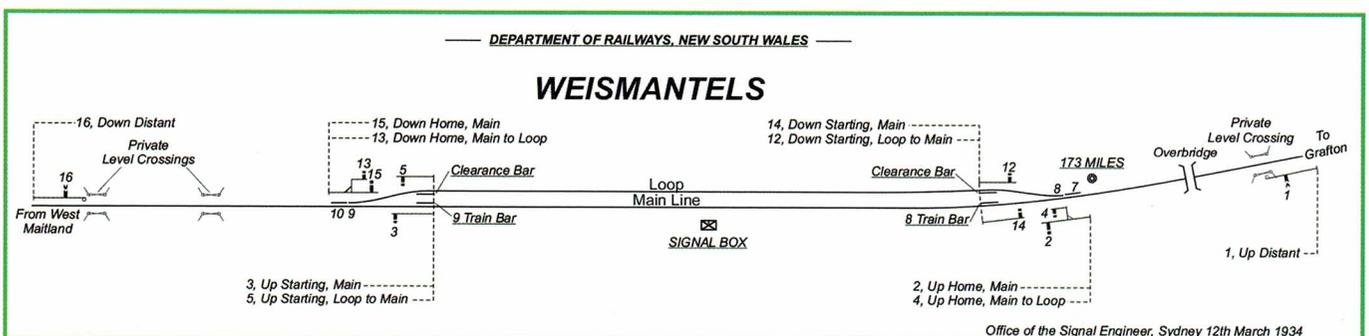
As it turned out, I backed the guard's story at the Departmental Enquiry because I witnessed the event from the signal box. From the blackened burnt out wires on the stanchion they worked out that it must have been hit by a lightning strike and the guard got away with it!

END NOTES

1. *Kalgoorlie Miner* (WA), 20 June 1949, p4, 'Disasterous Floods; Devestation in NSW—Seven Persons Dead'.
2. Letter dated 3 January 1967 from the Chief Traffic Manager, Central Station Sydney, Department of Railways, New South Wales.



John Barnard poses in front of Intercity V Set 29 during the official opening ceremony for the extension of electric trains to Kiama in November 2001. KATHRYN WHITE



Track and signal diagram for Weismantels dated 12 March 1934. DEPARTMENT OF RAILWAYS NSW, ARHSNSW RAILWAY RESOURCE CENTRE