

Documentary evidence

Beenyup Farm, Byford, was established c.1911 by William and Mary Willis. The farm was subsequently operated by Ernest and Edith (née Willis) Lovegrove, and then by Keith Ernest Lovegrove. Since Keith Lovegrove sold the farm in 1985, the land has been used only intermittently, and in 2013 is subject to plans for development into a residential estate.

The Aboriginal name for the area now known as Byford was Beenyup (meaning 'place of water'), which was altered by early European settlers to Beenup.¹ The place was later changed to Byford in 1920, although the local stream is still known as Beenyup Brook.²

In 1842, Henry Mead arrived in Western Australia from Whitby, Yorkshire, along with his two brothers.³ Around 1870 a strike by Mead's employees forced him sell his Whitby Falls estate and purchase a place above Cardup, followed by Millrace Farm at Byford,⁴

The development of the South-Western Railway from Perth to Bunbury promised to open up land along its route. Even as the line was being constructed, it was being used to market land in the Beenup district.⁵ Although a Siding was opened in 1893,⁶ it was not until 1913 that a railway station, with station master, was finally constructed.⁷

The timber and brick industries began to change the pastoral nature of the district from the late 1890s. Three sawmills began operating in the hills along Beenyup Brook, from where the timber was hauled down to Beenup Siding by bullock teams.⁸

Cardup Brickworks was started by the Bunning Bros. and the Millard Bros., probably in the late 1890s. Although they employed a number of men who mostly camped on the job, there were periods when the works shut down for lack of orders. Consequently, there was little incentive for any of the men to make permanent homes in the area.⁹

¹ A local, oft repeated, legend ascribes the change from Beenyup to Beenup as a mistake by a careless signwriter during the construction of the railway station in 1913. However, the name Beenup was used for at least two decades before the South-Western Line was constructed. For example, see: 'Advertising', *Inquirer & Commercial News*, 9 December 1874, p. 3.

² For a very brief survey of the pre-contact Aboriginal history of the area see: Coy, Neil J., *The Serpentine: A History of the Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale* (Mundijong, 1979), pp. 3-6

³ Carter, Jennie, & Bevan Carter, *Settlement to City: A History of the Armadale District and its People* (Armadale, 2011), p. 31

⁴ Also written as 'Mill Race Farm', and very occasionally 'Millbrace'. Nairn, H. E., & M. Barge, 'The History of the Byford District', (unpublished, 18 September 1970, copy held by Birtwistle Local Studies Library, Box 8 [ARM])

⁵ 'Classified Advertising', *West Australian*, 16 December 1891, p. 5

⁶ Byford Progress Association, 'Byford — A Pictorial History' (Byford, 2002), p. 29

⁷ Coy, *Serpentine*, p. 179; Nairn & Barge, 'The History of the Byford District'

⁸ Coy, *Serpentine*, p. 174

⁹ Nairn & Barge, 'The History of the Byford District'

The 1904 electoral roll listed thirty-four adults at Beenup and twenty-seven at Cardup, Nine men were employed at Buckingham's timber mill, while at Cardup fourteen men were engaged at brickmaking. Farmers in the district included Samuel Bateman, Thomas and William Cook, A. J. Gordin, Nigel and Laurence Hall, Henry George Mead, Albert Mead, William Nairn, Arthur Shelley, Edgar and Nicholas Uren, Samuel Turner and A. G. Shelley.¹⁰

Byford's early settlers tried various ways to earn a living: orchards were planted, and dairying was tried. However, without easy transport to the market in Perth, milk had to be converted to butter to survive the journey. Around 1910, Thomas Briggs came to Beenup and is credited as being the first dairy farmer from the district to successfully supply fresh milk to Perth.¹¹

Around 1911, William and Mary Willis arrived in Beenup to establish a fruit farm.¹² In 1903 William (b. 1862, NSW; d. 1949, Perth) had married Mary Ann Pitman (b. 1866, Houghton, SA; d. 1932, Byford).¹³ Initially resident in Waroona, the couple had four children: a child that died in infancy (1904); Edith Alice Willis (1905-1996); Ethel May Willis (b. 1907), who became a school teacher; and, James Henry Ambrose Willis (b. 1910), who became a dairy farmer.¹⁴

William was a Methodist lay preacher in the district, while his daughter Edith was well-known for playing the organ at the church in Byford.¹⁵

William and Mary's first farm, 'Dundatha', was off Nettleton Road. They ran this in conjunction with *Beenyup Farm*, which was 90 acres (36 ha), together with another 1,000 acres of land (400 ha) along the escarpment.¹⁶ The Willis family appear to have continued as fruit farmers until c.1924, when they expanded into dairy farming.¹⁷

From 1912 the Labor administration engaged in its controversial policy of 'state socialism', creating a number of Government owned industries. These included sawmills, dairies, shipping services, hotels, abattoirs and butchers shops, farm implement works, quarrying and brickmaking.¹⁸

¹⁰ Coy, *Serpentine*, p. 175

¹¹ Nairn & Barge, 'The History of the Byford District'

¹² *Post Office Directory*, 1912

¹³ Mary Ann Pitman was one of the children of Isaac Pitman, inventor of a popular form of shorthand.

¹⁴ Information supplied by Keith and Yvonne Lovegrove, 25 October 2013

¹⁵ Information supplied by Keith and Yvonne Lovegrove, 25 October 2013

¹⁶ Information supplied by Keith and Yvonne Lovegrove, 25 October 2013

¹⁷ *Post Office Directories*, 1912-25

¹⁸ Robertson, R., 'Scaddan, John (1876-1934)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/scaddan-john-8348/text14651 (accessed 11 October 2013)

State brickworks were seen as a way of reducing costs for housing. In 1913, Beenup was one location selected,¹⁹ and the site was fully operational by 1915. A spur line was constructed to the Brickworks, requiring the construction of a railway bridge at Millbrace Glen.²⁰ Construction of the State Building Supply brickworks at Armadale in the early 1950s, caused the closure of Byford's works in 1961.²¹

An official townsite had been surveyed west of the railway in 1906,²² but by 1914 no buildings had been erected on it. One of the largest properties in the area, Blytheswood Estate to the east of the line,²³ was subdivided in anticipation of the influx of new residents.²⁴ However, blocks were slow to sell.

For some reason, the Beenup Progress Association (William Willis being a prominent member) decided that Beenup was an unsuitable name and asked for a change. A subsequent ballot asked residents to choose between Beenup, Beenyup, Byford, Glengeorge and Winterbourne. The name Byford was gazetted on 23 April 1920.²⁵

In 1921 the Group Settlement Scheme was established. A great deal of unused land was subdivided and many new arrivals from England and elsewhere settled on small blocks which they had helped to clear and improve. This saw the intensification of dairy industry in the Byford district.²⁶

In the Byford district, the Government bought Samuel Bateman's estate of 13,000 acres and cut it up into smaller farms for the Group Settlement Scheme.²⁷ This brought 40 families to the area, many of whom engaged in dairying.²⁸ For ten years, the Byford district was the largest supplier of milk to the Metropolitan region. In 1926, more than 3,000 gallons of milk was sent daily.²⁹

¹⁹ 'State Brickworks', *Sunday Times*, 12 January 1913, p. 1

²⁰ 'The State Brick Works at Beenup', *Western Mail*, 19 December 1913, p. 34; 'State Brickworks at Beenup', *Sunday Times*, 15 June 1913, p. 6. As of October 2013, the future of this bridge was uncertain, as it currently requires a substantial investment to conserve it.

²¹ Coy, *Serpentine*, pp. 181-83

²² Around the area now occupied by Briggs Park.

²³ Most secondary sources describe this as 'Blythewood'. However, all contemporary reports use 'Blytheswood'.

²⁴ 'State Brickworks at Beenup', *Sunday Times*, 15 June 1913, p. 6

²⁵ Coy, *Serpentine*, p. 181

²⁶ Walker, F., 'Country Shows Mirror of WA Progress', September 1952 (copy held by Birtwistle Local Studies Library, Box 8 [ARM])

²⁷ Nairn & Barge, 'The History of the Byford District'

²⁸ Byford Progress Association, 'Byford', p. 3

²⁹ Walker, 'Country Shows'

However, most group settlers ('groupies') had little or no experience of farming, and large numbers of families abandoned their land unable to handle the conditions and meet the repayments on their loans.

Around 1924, William and Mary Willis diversified their business into dairy production on *Beenyup Farm*. The herd, which was initially milked by hand, was mainly Friesians and Jersey cows. The milk would be transported on the night train.³⁰

Although quite small in number – around twenty head – William was still able to raise extra money by selling milk from a cart around the Jarrahdale area. Many years later, Keith Lovegrove also sold milk from a horse and cart within the Byford area. People would leave a billy can at the door with a note saying how much milk they wanted for that day.³¹

By the mid-1920s the Byford-Cardup district had blossomed into a thriving community boasting two brickworks, a number of small, thriving businesses, and a host of dairy farms on the more fertile soils of the Oaklands Estate. In June 1926, a public meeting in the Byford Hall decided to form the Byford Agricultural Society. The new committee worked hard to upgrade the recreation ground (now Briggs Park) to hold an Agricultural Show.³²

When opening the first Byford Show on 13 November 1926, Sir James Mitchell complimented the Agricultural Society on the excellent entries received. For the next 40 years the Byford Show was acknowledged as one of the most successful shows in Western Australia, outside of the Perth Royal.³³ However, by 1966 public support had waned and this year saw the last Show in the Byford district.³⁴

Byford's first church, Byford Presbyterian in Clifton Road, was consecrated on 31 March 1928.³⁵ Both the Methodists and the Church of England also held their services in the building. It was not until 1947 that the Church of England formed a committee to build a church of their own, which finally opened in February 1960.³⁶

1930 saw electricity brought to around 50 homes in Byford. This enabled movies to be shown in the old Hall, which were still popular when the new Hall was constructed in 1961.³⁷

After the fall of Singapore to the Japanese army on 15 February 1942, the Commonwealth Government purchased 100 hectares of Cardup Farm from the Nairn family. Within a very

³⁰ Information supplied by Keith and Yvonne Lovegrove, 25 October 2013

³¹ Information supplied by Keith and Yvonne Lovegrove, 25 October 2013

³² Coy, *Serpentine*, pp. 185-87

³³ Coy, *Serpentine*, pp. 185-87

³⁴ Coy, *Serpentine*, pp. 185-87

³⁵ 'Country Chatter', *Sunday Times*, 1 April 1928, p. 3

³⁶ Nairn & Barge, 'The History of the Byford District'

³⁷ Byford Progress Association, 'Byford', p. 3

short time storage bunkers, packing sheds, mess huts, workshops and an assembly building were constructed.³⁸ By late 1942 more than 250 workers were busy assembling sea-mines and ammunition.³⁹ After the War, activities were gradually scaled down until the Depot was transferred to Garden Island in 1981.⁴⁰

During World War II, the Willis' son, James, served with the 10th Light Horse Regiment. William was increasingly unable to run the farm, and attempted to get his son discharged so he could come home and operate the farm. However, permission from the War Office was not forthcoming.⁴¹

In 1946, William gave the 1,000 acres of land to James and the 90 acres of *Beenyup Farm* jointly to Edith and Ethel. Subsequently, Edith and her husband, Ernest, bought out her sister's share, and James sold the 1,000 acres outside the family and relocated to Perth.⁴²

In 1938, Edith had married Ernest Alfred Lovegrove (1906-58), a welder for Metters Ovens. They lived in Nedlands where four children were born: Keith Ernest Lovegrove (b. 1939), a dairy farmer; Alice Fay Lovegrove (b. 1940), a typist; Alfred Leslie Lovegrove (b. 1942), a horticulturalist; and, Dorothy Jean Lovegrove (b. 1944), a secretary.⁴³

In 1946, when Ernest and Edith Lovegrove relocated to *Beenyup Farm*, there was a simple house on the land, which appears to have been unfit for habitation. Consequently, a new residence was constructed in the late 1940s, or early 1950s, the design of which was dictated by the austerity measures then in place. This residence was demolished shortly after the Lovegroves sold the farm in 1985.⁴⁴

Ernest Lovegrove died in an unfortunate accident in 1958, after which Keith Lovegrove and his mother ran *Beenyup Farm*.⁴⁵ After running the farm as a dairy farm for some time, Keith eventually turned to beef cattle: Murray Greys and Herefords. Horses were also agisted on the farm, especially for local children, where they could saddle up and ride. Keith also ran a Golden Fleece Drum Agency to sell bulk fuel.⁴⁶

³⁸ Coy, *Serpentine*, pp. 189-90

³⁹ Byford Progress Association, 'Byford', p. 3

⁴⁰ Coy, *Serpentine*, pp. 189-90

⁴¹ Information supplied by Keith and Yvonne Lovegrove, 25 October 2013

⁴² Information supplied by Keith and Yvonne Lovegrove, 25 October 2013

⁴³ Information supplied by Keith and Yvonne Lovegrove, 25 October 2013

⁴⁴ Information supplied by Keith and Yvonne Lovegrove, 25 October 2013. Keith and Yvonne Lovegrove hold a picture of this house in their private archives.

⁴⁵ Information supplied by Keith and Yvonne Lovegrove, 25 October 2013

⁴⁶ Information supplied by Keith and Yvonne Lovegrove, 25 October 2013

The 1970s saw Byford begin an unprecedented era of expansion which coincided with the rapid development of Armadale. The improved road network had made the district attractive as a semi-rural retreat for city workers and for those employed at the Kwinana industrial complex.⁴⁷

However, there was increasing dissatisfaction by rural landholders on rates being charged by the Armadale-Kelmscott Shire.⁴⁸ At an Armadale-Kelmscott Shire Council meeting in June 1973, Byford ward member, Peter Kargotich, raised the issue of a 'severance of Byford and attachment to the Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale'.⁴⁹ A referendum was held in April 1977, with the result being an overwhelming majority in favour of secession. It took until October 1977 to iron out the details, but at last the transfer to Serpentine-Jarrahdale was completed.⁵⁰

The centre of Byford entered the 1980s looking increasingly suburban: a new shopping centre, hardware store, a second supermarket, post office, butchers, hairdressers, newsagents, travel and real estate agents, haberdashery, building society, dentist surgery and chemist.⁵¹

In 1985, Keith and Yvonne Lovegrove sold *Beenyup Farm*, and Keith moved into farm contracting. It appears that little has happened to the land since that date, with the exception of some agistment for horses.⁵²

The arrival of articulated sewerage in Byford in 2001 saw a large area surrounding the existing townsite zoned for urban development to accommodate up to 25,000 additional residents.⁵³ In 2005 land around the former Naval Depot was approved for subdivision for the 'Byford by the Scarp' housing development. From 2009, 'The Glades at Byford' became the largest new master-planned community in the south-east corridor. Set to comprise 3,500 residences, 'The Glades' will eventually become home to more than 10,000 people.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ Coy, *Serpentine*, p. 192

⁴⁸ Coy, *Serpentine*, p. 192

⁴⁹ Carter & Carter, *Settlement to City*, p. 342

⁵⁰ Carter & Carter, *Settlement to City*, p. 343

⁵¹ Coy, *Serpentine*, pp. 193-94

⁵² Information supplied by Keith and Yvonne Lovegrove, 25 October 2013

⁵³ Byford Progress Association, 'Byford', p. 3

⁵⁴ www.nmdsa.org.au/Documents/glades.pdf (accessed 10 October 2013)

Names of Beenup/Byford dairy farmers⁵⁵

Peter A. Blair	E. T. Thatcher
Thomas Briggs	Edgar Uren
L. M. Clifton	G. E. Wannell
Edward C. Craighill	W. J. Willis
A. Cunningham	
Sid Curtis	
Jack Cyprian	
Joe Cyprian	
T. W. Dougall	
J. A. Drysdale	
Richard Holmes	
Jack Kargotich	
Chris Kavanagh	
Reginald Kennedy	
F. W. Leaver & Sons	
E. M. Lorenz	
Ernest Lovegrove	
Keith Lovegrove	
W. H. Newman	
A. E. Orton	
J. Orton	
W. R. Pethick	
William Peverett	
W. Richardson	
Timothy Roberts	
J. D. Taylor	

⁵⁵ This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but represents those identified as dairy farmers (or dairymen) in the *Post Office Directories*, 1904-1949, with the addition of Ernest and Keith Lovegrove, the last two owners of *Beenyup Farm*.