



TOWN OF
VICTORIA PARK

LOCAL HISTORY AWARDS

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Copper Pots, Socks and Jocks



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Category
Personal Memoirs

COPPER POTS, SOCKS AND JOCKS

Life raising 5 boys under a Hills Hoist in East Victoria Park in 1950s

It's often said the kitchen is the heart of the home but in the case of 16 Whittlesford Street, East Victoria Park, something else sat right in the centre: a large copper pot.

The copper pot of course was in the laundry and, just like a heart, it too took a beating!

The 3 bedroom, 1 bathroom home sits high on a 744m² hilltop corner block and it's design quite literally had the laundry placed right in the middle of the home. Bedrooms surrounded it, front and back, a kitchen and dining area too, and a verandah ran the length of the rear sleepout before opening onto a garden.

It was built by Ken and Molly Newman in 1956 as part of a war service entitlement. Ken had served in WW2 and was able to build a home at a cheaper rate by the Government.

They lived in this home for 32 years and raised their five sons Michael (born 1953), Paul (1955), Mark (1958), David (1960) and Andrew (1972).

Yes, a house of five growing boys, born over a span of 19 years. It was always full on and always full of washing!

Molly stood at the heart of the home using that copper pot every day. Of course, all the washing was done by hand. It was hard and slow work, first filling up the pot with hot water, then scrubbing and rubbing the clothes together with a bar of soap, rinsing them and finally putting them through a manual wringer ready to be hung out.

Molly says she spent three hours standing at the copper pot every morning once the boys had toddled off to school, washing the clothes from the day before.

She often used to say if she had a dollar for all the socks and jocks she'd washed in that copper pot, she'd be a millionaire (and she may well be right!).

Next stop after finishing at the copper pot was to walk outside to meet another hardworking Australian icon: the Hills Hoist.

Just like the copper pot, the Hills Hoist was always full and busy: this time doing the drying... and sometimes the flying.

Yes, not only was it socks and jocks and the rest of the household washing hanging on its line, quite often it had kids spinning around (and falling off) its metal arms too.

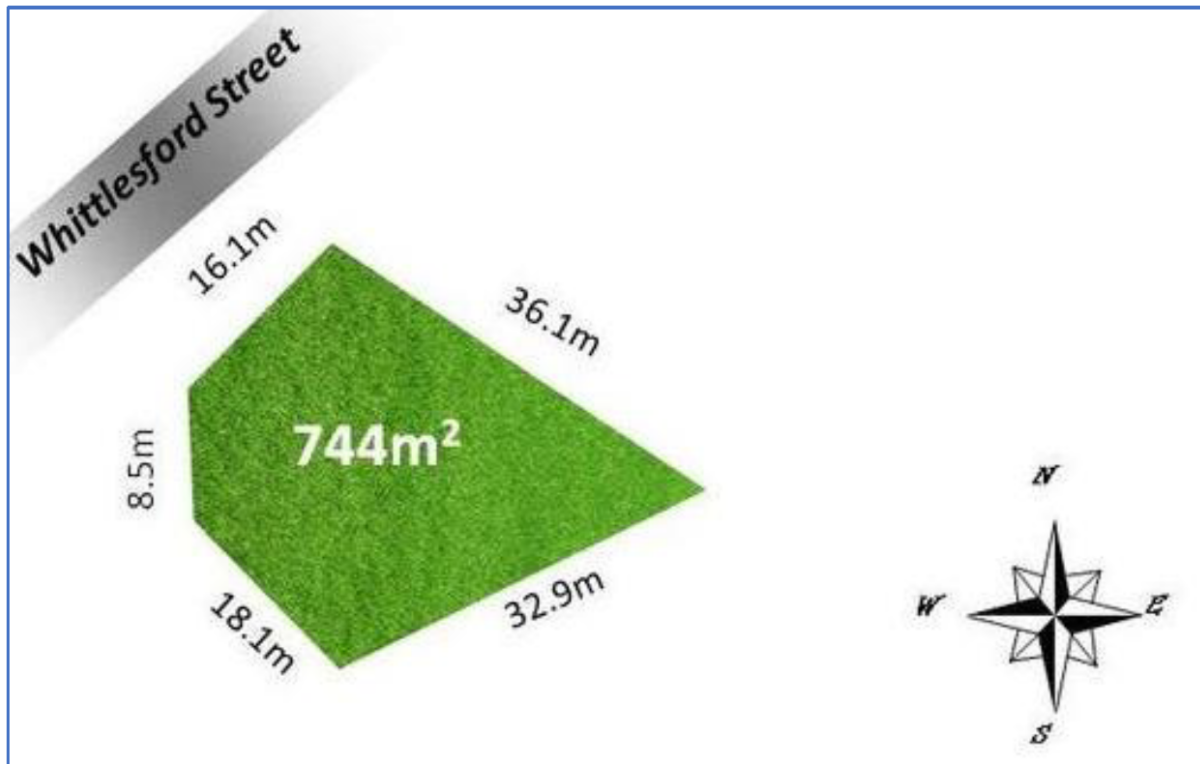


(Photo supplied by Molly Newman and taken at 16 Whittlesford Street, East Victoria Park in 1977)

Of course, the Newman's had the largest model available of the Hills Hoist installed in the back yard and in this picture taken in 1977, you can see everyone: from left Michael, Mark, Molly, Paul, Andrew, Ken and David.

Luckily this iconic Australian could outlast the harshest of conditions and the rowdiest of childhood games – you know the ones we're talking about.

Flying around on the washing line was perfectly fitting because the block was shaped like a kite. Being on a corner, the land had a wide pointed double frontage and then tapered off at the rear, much like the top of a kite does.



(Photo supplied by www.realestate.com.au showing the block shape)

As a result, the back garden wasn't that big, and the Hills Hoist dominated most of it. This was a childhood game that was meant to be.

Now, there was just one day a year that Molly didn't do the washing or visit the Hills Hoist, and that was on Christmas Day.

But the hard-working copper pot never got a day off. Every Christmas it was cleaned and filled with hot water ready to carry something else other than clothes: the Christmas ham!

Molly laughs at the memory and says she doesn't know if boiling the Christmas ham was that normal for others, but said it was normal for them!

You couldn't buy cooked hams back then, so they were bought raw from the butcher and cooked at home.

The original wood oven in this house was too small for a massive ham to feed a family of 7, so into the pot it went for a few hours to slowly cook.

Rest assured, the ham didn't go through the ringer and definitely didn't hang out to dry on the line! Although if it ever did and got flung off like the boys often did, it would bring new meaning to the phrase that pigs can fly.

Ten years after building the home, Molly enjoyed two Christmases one year. You see, the family upgraded both the kitchen and laundry meaning they now had an electric oven, stove and fridge (to replace the ice chest) and an electric washing machine!

She said the new Westinghouse washer halved her time in the laundry and she's never eaten a copper pot cooked ham ever since!

Around the same time, they also bid farewell to the Hills Hoist, with all the boys helping their dad with a backyard makeover.

The Hoist was hoisted out sometime in the 1980s and Ken built a brick barbecue, wooden outdoor setting and a pergola for the family to enjoy. The washing line was replaced with one of those long retractable ones, which meant no more swinging.

Looking back, Molly said her busy lifestyle was all in a day's work and she wouldn't change a thing. Turns out, it was always meant to be.

Remember 16 Whittlesford St sat atop a hill on a corner block? Well, the corner street was serendipitously called Washer Street! Named for different reasons though as it was in honour of Private Harry Izod Washer (1893-1917) who was killed in action in France and spent most of his formative years living in Victoria Park.

The original home is still there today. Ken and Molly sold it in September 1988 for \$97,750 and it was sold again in March 2011 for \$505,000.

While the copper pot may have long gone, the memories made there are golden.



Top L-R: the home in 1977 and in 2011. Bottom L-R: the pergola and side of the retractable line, Molly and Ken in front of the BBQ in the pergola (circa 1980s) and the backyard with the retractable line and no pergola in 2011. (1977 and 1980s photos courtesy of Molly Newman and 2011 courtesy of www.realestate.com.au)

Written by Jo Newman (wife to Andrew Newman and daughter-in-law to Molly).