

Autobiography of Mark King 1862 – 1955

As Written about 1952



**Mark & Marion King – 60th Anniversary
January 1st, 1954**

Born at Morphett Vale on his parents' farm near Port Noarlunga on March 29th, 1862, being the 6th child, and the 3rd son of William and Maria King.

Broke his left arm when about 5 years old, I was small and delicate in appearance – the doctor told my mother that she would have difficulty in rearing me. I began school about this time, at Mr John Ferry's School, a short distance west of Morphett Vale. At 9 years I could read & write fairly well/

In late 1871 with Father, brother Joe, and sisters Maria & Sarah left for Gulnare where my father had selected 640 acres of good land. For a short time the family lived in tents till a large shed was erected for a home. At this time there were no schools or churches nearby – two houses in Georgetown.

My first job was shepherding – ours & Galloways sheep – 300 - we had a roaming commission, there being no fences for miles. One day at Galloways (3 miles North) another at Matthews at Gulnare South (3-4 miles), the next at Georgetown (4 miles Northeast) and the next along the foothills. Before I was 10, my sister Sarah and I helped winding the buckets of earth that Dad was working. Also at that time and later my job

was rounding up the bullocks out on the plain, where by this time, dozens of stock from farmers grazed. Frequently they were sought out and rounded up before sunrise.

At 10 I started bullock driving which I disliked very much, and threw my hat in the air when Dad sold the bullocks.

For the first few years, the wheat grown at Gulnare & other localities was carted to Port Pirie, 30 miles away. I occasionally went on some of these trips, and well remember the long swamps and high embankments on which Pirie's main street was situated with its rough sheds and few wooden houses. Also the long string of teams smothered in dust and flies waiting their turn to unload, often at 100 degrees in the shade.

We arrived at the farm on March 22nd, 1871 and about the April following, Jack Headly, a blacksmith, pitched his tent in Georgetown. Quite a few settlers were in Gulnare before us, such as Alex & Mrs Galloway, William & David Thomson, George Inglis, Matthews the Poundkeeper, and many arrived in the next year or two :

Chas Baldcock, Murphy, McAuley, Brogan, Brown & Fitzgerald next to us At the back McGuire, Smallacombe, John David. Phillips, Okey Bond, Fisher, Chas Read and others. For the first year or two, there were no schools, then Mr Coniguire opened one at Gulnare, 4 miles south of us in a room at Pomeroy's home. Some of us went there when we could, sometimes in a cart, but quite often my Sister Liza & I walked.

Later, when a school started at Georgetown (still 4 miles) we went there. I liked school and was said to make good progress, but being old enough to help at home, attendance was very irregular & often forgot most of what I had learned.

It was at the Georgetown School that I won my first boys hurdle race at a picnic held on Slogan's Farm south of Georgetown. Went to the sport on my way home from school, and got there in time for the race. It was well understood by the Promoters that Paddy O'Malley, who was well trained would win. I won easily by yards

At 15, I was doing more or less a man's job, helping fencing, wood carting, dam sinking and general farm work. It was while carting from White's Forest near Stone Hut, I was run over by an empty bullock dray near Gladstone. Joe was driving the team, and I fell on my back square in front of the wheel – Joe picked me up, and helped me into the dray. No one knew for weeks afterwards about the mishap, and I never felt any ill effects.

After about the age of 13, I saw little of school, except on Sundays when we went regularly first to Gulnare, and later to Georgetown to the Baptist octagon shaped church erected by that beloved old man Rev. David Badger

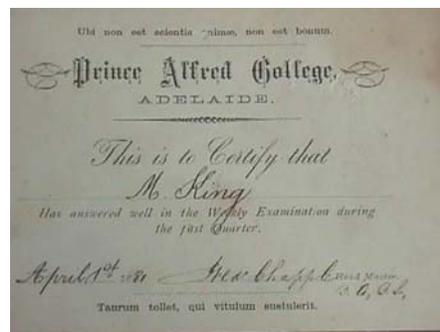
At 17, after much consideration, my parents decided that I should go to college for 3 months. & was nearly 18 and weighing 9stone 4 pounds. I could read well, write badly & forgotten the rules of syntax.

This was my debut into Prince Alfred College., Class 2. My teacher was Mr Hoskins.

Question “Will you take Latin” No ! What did I know or want with Latin !

Before the term was out I found that Latin and Arithmetic counted as two subjects in exams and as there were 32 in my class I would be classed as bottom, namely 64 points.

However, I had a fair report and was sent back until Xmas, another 6 months. I took Latin and got 8th from top in that term.



After that I topped my class in each term until the end of 1881, Besides being well up in all subjects, it was there that I learned to play football and cricket. In 1881 I played in the first football match between St Peters College & PAC & that was at the Adelaide Oval. We won by 4 goals to 1 goal – I had the good luck to kick one goal, said to have been the best one of the day. At the Sports Day in 1880, I ran 2nd in the 100 yards championship and I think 2nd in another race.

In the 1881 College Sports, I ran in six races all from scratch. Got 1st in the 120 yards flat, 200 yards & 440 yards - 2nd in the 150 yards flat and 100 yards championship and 3rd in the 150 yards hurdles I got a silver mounted emu egg for the 440 and a silver cup for the 120. I won two special teacher's prizes at the last exam, but he would only allow me one. This was for Science.

After College, I returned to the farm which was being worked by Joe and Ed Manton. Later Manton sold out, and I joined Joe. We worked together until 1891, when I left and went to Red Hill into partnership with Ed Manton in a Land & Agency business. Our farming experiences were not profitable. The crops or prices or both were a loss. While cockspur and wild oats were difficult to combat, and the outlook turned very poor. During the farming period, I took a good deal of interest in sports. For a year or two, was often spoken of in the "Areas Express" as the best man on the ground. I also did a good deal of running in foot races & jumping. I won sometimes at running and was considered fairly fast, however it was at jumping I excelled. I think that only once was I beaten in the running high jump – never beaten in 3 standing long jumps, and never beaten by scratch men in the running hop, skip & jump.. Never beaten, but twice tied in the standing high jump. The ties were the first I tried at 4' 4", and the last at 5' ½", both at Georgetown. In cricket, I never reached the 1st 11 at college, played 2nd 11. Never did much for Georgetown, but for 2 years playing for Gladstone, I had the best bowling average for our team.. I was a slow bowler breaking both ways I was considered particularly good in the field.

During the years on the farm, I took a good deal of interest in Public Affairs, urging rail construction from Blythe. Interest in the Gladstone model parliament, and a deep interest in the Christian Endeavour movement, and also temperance.. I was secretary of the Clover Hill Band of Hope for some years, and gave it credit in bringing me out as Speaker. Before that appointment, I was very shy and self conscious. It was at the Clover hill Sports held each year, that I won their championship Gold Medal.. The last year I was there before going to Broken Hill. I lost that medal about 1893/4 in Mundoora.

In 1890, I joined Manton in the agency business which looked to be quite a nice business. In February 1891, I married a Barbara Inglis and lived in Chapple Street. Unfortunately I lost her the following November, she took ill very suddenly and died in a few hours. She is buried in the West Broken Hill Cemetery.

In 1892, the first big strike occurred and business went to pieces, at that time I had 4 new cottages each let at 15/- per week, about 30 or 40 South Broken Hill Shares costing 5 pounds each, and a bank overdraft of 400 pounds.

After my wife's death, I lived with Rev & Mrs Gilmour, the Baptist Minister..I was the first superintendent at the Baptist Sunday School.

It was through the Gilmours that I met Marion Welbourn, whom I afterwards married. She came to Broken Hill to live with them temporarily .

The strike lasted some months. Business died out, no rents were paid and shares became almost unsaleable. I left Broken Hill and obtained a position at Gladstone for John Darling & Son – Wheat Merchants. In the spring of 1893 they transferred me to Mundoora. I got 10000 bags of wheat that year , against 5000 the previous year and 20,000 the next.

On January 1st 1894 I married Marion Welbourn and lived at Mundoora until June or July 1895. It was during that year we had a dreadful mice plague. There were millions of them, and it was impossible to keep the wheat stacks covered.. We used some 1500 new bags to replace damaged ones, and hundreds of bushels less came out of the stack than



Harold & Len (About 1904)

went in. Our first son, Charles Leonard was born in October 1894 (30th.)

In about July 1895 John Darling & Co decided to close the Agency .

We then went to Gladstone obtaining the SA Farmers Union Agency for corn, it was a very poor affair, and less corn. About this time the cream separators came into operation & began to transform dairying, so we built a creamery at the back of our house. Got a one horse driving gear and set to separating and hopes revived, but then only dashed away as the district was overrun with wild turnips and it spoilt the flavour of the milk. I was glad to get out of it at a loss.

We sold up, and my wife went to live with my mother at Aylesbury, and I went off to Western Australia to try my luck.

On the way over on the boat I met Fred Jarman, an old Clover Hill friend who was going over to take charge of a gold show, 30 miles from Coolgardie. He offered me a job which I accepted., although I had a letter of introduction to Throssill & Co at Northam who was taking on the Massey Harris Agency

However I went on with Fred Jarman and had 4 weeks with him, and the show shut down a week after I left.. The returns there were no good from the Battery and I was fortunate to miss being killed in an old shaft that we were deepening.. Coming off my two hours below, I noticed a bulge in the shaft, so Jarman went down to see, gave it a rap with his pick, and about 2 tons came away smashing the bucket he was standing on.

From there went to Northam for Throssills at 3 pounds per week. They had two Travellers out then. Inside three months the others were put off and later they actually gave me 3 pounds 10 shillings. As my work seemed secure, I sent for my wife and heir, and met them at Albany.

While at Northam besides learning to sell machinery, I learned to build binders & repair & start them. I was considered a real expert before the season ended..

After some 2 years here, the Massey- Harris Traveller, Mr McInnes, suggested me going to J Webster & Son, their agent in Tasmania. They would give me better wages, and pay 15 pounds for fares. So off to Launceston in Tassie we went in July 1899, 2 weeks after Layton was born.

We spent about 2 ½ years in Tasmania, first at Launceston and later at Burnie. Here I was presented with a Moody & Sankey Hymn Book in recognition of 3 months services at the Baptist Church during the Minister's illness.

During that winter, negotiations opened up with Throssills wanting me to take up their agency in Katanning W.A. In about October we said goodbye to Tasmania and went to Katanning. At that time it was only a small town and Presse F.H. & Co were the big business people of that district. It was generally thought that we would not be able to build up or sustain the business (machinery etc) , but it grew well and we made good progress.

In 4/5 years we had bought a good home, 3 blocks of land, and built a machinery shed facing the railway.



The Machinery Shed in Katanning

About this time Mallee Bark & specie was found valuable for tanning and I bought and stripped on land. I selected for this purpose.- probably 3000 – 4000 tons. Wills & Co being the agents. I also did a good deal in stock horses and sheep dealing. However, the old saying” That all that is not gold that glitters” unfortunately proved to be true. Several things happened, among others, too big advances were made on Bark which resulted in loss. Bush fires destroyed hundreds of tons. Advances made to farmers in stock & cash which was owing chiefly to poor returns. The farmers generally were very poor to start with, and money spent on the land which I at first only intended to hold for Bark. These altogether with bank restrictions caused a retirement from the business so that in 1913 I left for S.A. having procured a position with H.V. McKay as a salesman.

During our stay in W.A., I was elected President of the WA Baptist Union and later as chairman of the South Baptist Association.. Here I also joined the Freemasons No 30 and reached the Senior Wardens Chair. I was also Chief Ruler of the Rechabites at Katanning. We had a good debating club and generally we won – more than once.. I was adjudicated as the best speaker in these debates, I joined the Rifle Club and won a couple of spoons, although I never did a great deal of shooting (1910) In Katanning our two younger sons were born, Harold Welbourn and Mark Melville. Our eldest son CL joined the Union Bank at Katanning after leaving Scotch College and remained there after we left.

We arrived in Adelaide on April 13th, 1913 We at once arranged to buy a house in Buller street Prospect on a small deposit in preference to renting. In a month or two I was sent by McKays to travel on the West Coast. The season proved dry and the final result was poor & I was recalled to Adelaide in 1914 – Known as the “Drought Year”

I was sent out to sell motor cars – Hupmobiles & was successful in doing good business mostly around Ororoo and was credited with being the only traveller paying expenses. I remained with McKay until about 1926, and then formed The Adelaide Development Company – Land Estate Agents.

I did remarkably well selling allotments for a year or two mostly in the country districts. With cash received and commission to come I had earned probably 4000 pounds. Some of this never matured, the depression came and played havoc with things.

Prior to the depression CL King and some others formed a company and purchased an estate near Sleeps Hill, and put a lot of money into it. . We also started a cash order business. The depression smashed these and left me high and dry once more.

However we hoped that the farmers who had bought the Bellevue land and others would eventually pay up. We started a fresh company called Thrift Ltd., partly to try and collect outstandings.

Though we stuck to that company for several years really first existing, and gradually growing, the returns on the land became very poor, and a lot fell through, while the old debts were so disappointing that they became negligible

Then Mr Eric Bowes , Adelaide Manager for Hilliness Ladies Dresses put a proposition to the company to open in this line of business. I was loth to do this, but admitted that if it could be run on a 500 pound basis , and did not pay, the 500 pond loss would not break the company The other Directors were more positive than I.

The final result was a dismal failure, which caused a collapse of the whole concern and left me and others bankrupt, or stoney broke.!!

Now at the age of 77, we (wife & I) just manage to live comfortably, having a nice home to live in , the overhead expenses being arranged by my three sons, Layton, Harold and Melville., the latter living with us.

Since my early 20's I have maintained a continuous church interest, and when near a Baptist Church worshipped there.- but always somewhere.

At Northam WA , Methodist and later Presbyterian before this at Gladstone and Mundoora. At Kensington Gardens in SA, when we lived there, the Congregational Church.

In all these years, I have constantly preached at most, if not all of these churches and for many years rarely missed a Sunday without taking a service somewhere. In Katanning, I frequently went to out stations, 10 to 18 miles each way by sulky or buggy.

My wife & I, with CL and his wife motored to the first Australian Baptist Congress in Sydney, so we were at the inaugural celebrations of the above organization

We had a wonderful trip right through, scarcely any rain, visited the Jenolan Caves, Katoomba, Mears Falls, west to Melbourne via the Hume Highway. Had 2 accidents by axles breaking, but no one was hurt.



Mark King as President of the S.A. Baptist Union

In 1927/8 I was elected Vice President of the SA Baptist Union, and in 1929, as President, and was also in that year a member of the General Committee of the Baptist Union of Australasia, which for the time being was held in SA.

I might say that up to the present, I am the only Layman who has been president of more than one State in the Commonwealth, that was WA and SA.

For 47 years, I have been a Rechabite and up to date have never had to call on the Lodge for sick pay. My health has been exceptionally good and I wish to put on record my devoted thanks to Almighty God for His wonderful care over my mind and body His over generous patience with me in my waywardness, forgetfulness & careless if not willful disobedience to Him. I am glad that Christ came to save sinners and those out of the way, lift men out of the mirey clay, and set their feet on the rock.

Solomon said "He must findeth a wife, for it is a good thing" No words that I can adequately unfold of all that this has meant to me. For nearly 46 years, Marion Welbourn

has stood beside me, often bearing the big end of the burden, through thick and thin, as promised “For better for worse, in sickness & in health, for richer, for poorer” she has constantly proved a moral spiritual force – a true partner – A woman who any man, be he King or Peasant would be proud to have as a partner. Her house is her home in the best sense. Her sons, I am sure, call her blessed, her friends know her as a trusted friend in confidence, and she has never known to be disloyal to relations or friends. She hates hypocrisy, deceit and lies, and can be firm and critical, but always just to hear explanations, and freely forgive.

Many men have thanked their mother for character and success, I too give my mother a big place and I had a worthy mother & father, both Godly people. On a foundation such as this gave me a background and what else I owe later in the last, nearly, half century has largely been Home, the comfort & encouragement of Marion Welbourn God Bless her.

Mark King