

A brief history of the beach house

"SUMMERHILL"

39 Hall Street, Lorne

GPS reference: 38°31'28.5"S 143°59'05.9"E

Years 1922 to 2003

By Alan Doyle

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This presentation discusses a brief history of the Morrison family Beach house (cottage) with a photo collection attached. Presented in a timeline format.

The Morrison family were a successful family of early Colac and made their fortunes from being a town shop keeper (*Central Stores*) and auctioneer (*Central Auction Mart*). Richard and Jane Morrison had eleven children, two boys and nine girls. The boys and girls would become successful self-reliant men and women.

Lorne would become the family's holiday destination and in the early years they would stay at the guest houses for their holidays. This would be the start to many years connected to Lorne.

1922

PHOTO COLLECTION – directory 1-1922 – Lorne Guest House-Guests-Waterfalls

- Carinya Guest House LORNE – Alan Doyle
- Carinya Guest House LORNE with guests – Alan Doyle
Jane Morrison 4th from the left (in black)
- Erskine Falls 1 – Carinya guests 1922 – Alan Doyle
Marjorie Morrison 6th in front from the left.
- Erskine Falls 2 – Carinya guests 1922 – Alan Doyle
Marjorie Morrison 5th in back row from the left.
- Erskine Falls 3 – Carinya guests 1922 – Alan Doyle
Marjorie Morrison 6th in front row from the left (bathed in sunlight).
Richard Morrison 1st in front row from the right.
- Lower Kilimina Falls – Carinya guests 1922 – Alan Doyle
Marjorie Morrison 4th in back from the left (between two gentlemen).
- Margaret Falls – Carinya guests 1922 – Alan Doyle
Marjorie Morrison 2nd from the right.
- Sheoak Falls – Carinya guests 1922 – Alan Doyle
Marjorie Morrison 6th from the left.
Richard Morrison 2nd from the left.
Note the billies and pannikins in the middle of the group.
- Splitters Falls – Carinya guests 1922 – Alan Doyle
Marjorie Morrison 2nd from the left (sitting).
- Swallow Caves – Carinya guests 1922 – Alan Doyle
Marjorie Morrison 2nd from the left (sitting).
Richard Morrison 1st from the right.
- Upper Kilimina Falls – Carinya guests 1922 – Alan Doyle Marjorie Morrison 1st from the left (with hat on).



Marjorie Morrison

The Morrison sisters, of Nellie and Elizabeth purchase a block of land in North Lorne, on the 7 June 1922. Purchased from Mr. P. C. Hancox for £20 cash (Block in section 19, Township of Lorne).

The building of a cottage on the land was agreed upon to be called *Glan-y-mor* (Welsh for seaside).

NOTE: 1. The land size ran from what is the Ocean Road to what would become Dorman Street, further up the hill.
2. Percy Charles Hancox was a business man living in Colac. He was a Ford Motor Company agent and became a produce merchant in later years.

1927

April - A decision was made to change the holiday property name to *Summerhill*. This was done on the proposal of their father Richard Morrison, who was born in Summerhill, County Meath, Ireland. The name change was accepted.

Saturday 7 May - The property was surveyed at a cost of £2.2.0.

September – The building of the cottage was ordered with Mr. Kew as builder for a total cost of £250.

October – Furnishings purchased from Bilsons in Colac and transported by Mr. Gaylord £5.



Summerhill the cottage c1927 (image: Summerhill 1927 001 – Alan Doyle)

1928

On the 23 January - The Morrison sisters, of Nellie, Elizabeth, Marjorie and Dorothy purchased the adjoining block of land for £47.10.0 cash (Block No. 5 of section 19 Township of Lorne). As quoted “...for speculation purposes only..”

- NOTE:**
1. The land size ran from what is the Ocean Road to what would become Dorman Street, further up the hill.
 2. The ownership of two Blocks of section 19 Township of Lorne, would eventually be subdivided into four separate land titles. Two fronting Hall Street and the rear two fronting Dorman Street.
 3. **A family rumour (legend)**, is that “*Summerhill*” was built on the wrong block of land and was noticed by the sister’s father Richard Morrison. Measurements were retaken and by luck the affected block was for sale. Richard Morrison was a government land tax assessor, and valued the whole of the Otway forest in 1915. The Morrison sisters went back to Geelong and bought the block of land. At the time all property measurements were taken from Little Stoney Creek.

1931

Summerhill was nearly sold to Joseph Whitehead for £750.



The Morrison family enjoying tea and cake on the front veranda (images: Summerhill 1930s 006 – Alan Doyle and Summerhill 1930s 007 – Alan Doyle)

Late 1930s

Summerhill is extended with additional accommodation quarters on the west side of the cottage.

A new entrance stairway was rebuilt to the side.

PHOTO COLLECTION –

directory

2-SUMMERHILL – GOR – Hall St

- Summerhill 1929 001 – Alan Doyle
- Summerhill 1929 002 – Alan Doyle
- Summerhill 1929 003 – Alan Doyle
- Summerhill 1930s 004 – Alan Doyle
- Summerhill 1930s 005 – Alan Doyle
- Summerhill 1930s 006 – Alan Doyle
- Summerhill 1930s 007 – Alan Doyle
- Summerhill 1930s 008 – Alan Doyle
- Summerhill 1950s 009 – Alan Doyle
- Summerhill 1954 011 – Alan Doyle
- Summerhill 1978 001 – Alan Doyle
- Summerhill 1978 002 – Alan Doyle
- Summerhill 2003 001 – Alan Doyle
- Summerhill 2003 002 – Alan Doyle
- Summerhill 2003 003 – Alan Doyle
- Summerhill 2003 004 – Alan Doyle
- Summerhill Hall Street late 1940s 010 – Alan Doyle
- 37 Hall Street BLUE SEAS 1950 – Alan Doyle
- Mt Defiance c1936 – Alan Doyle



Mount Defiance ANZAC monument in a Whippet car owned by Nellie Morrison. Elizabeth Morrison standing and Marjorie Morrison sitting on the side board – c1936.(image: Mt Defiance c1936 – Alan Doyle)



Summerhill the cottage 1930s – extension to the left-hand side (image: Early North Iorne002 – Alan Doyle)

NOTE: The glass negative of this photo is still held with the Doyle family.



Summerhill the cottage 1930s – extension to the left hand side (image: Summerhill 1930s 004 – Alan Doyle)

1939

Summerhill survived the devastating Black Friday fires that raged around Lorne and Otway ranges.

Late 1940s

The image below shows a view from *Summerhill* looking west before Hall Street was put through. It was initially a walking track to Lorne. My mother Clare Doyle (nee Thomas) and her sister Janet Galley (nee Thomas) are shown in the photo.



Hall Street as a track late 1940s (image: Summerhill Hall St late 1940s 010 – Alan Doyle)

1954

Summerhill by 1954 was extended with a sleep out and garage added below. A stone façade was also built and replaced the timber step entrance.



Summerhill 1954 (image: Summerhill 1954 011 – Alan Doyle)

1978

Many happy family holiday and Christmas' were had at *Summerhill*.



Summerhill and Hall Street – 1978 (images: Summerhill 1978 001 & 002 – Alan Doyle)

c1981



Summerhill c1981 (image: Ash Wednesday 1983002 c1981 – Alan Doyle)

The perfect beach scene of *Summerhill* and neighbouring properties.

Local residents of Hall Street & Dorman Street

- **No. 37 Hall Street:** Permeant resident, *Blue Seas* owned by recently retired Geelong couple of Neil and Jean Fox.
- **No. 39 Hall Street:** Holiday home *Summerhill* owned by Clare Doyle and Janet Galley.
- **No. 41 Hall Street:** Holiday home owned by Jim and Serena Ryan.
- **No. 56 Dorman Street:** Holiday home owned by Mr. & Mrs. Thornton.
- **No. 58 Dorman Street:** Permeant resident, builder, Walter Van Looy.

1982

Marjorie Morrison was the last Morrison sister to own title of *Summerhill* and died in 1982. The transfer of the property went to her nieces Clare Doyle (nee Thomas) and Janet Galley (nee Thomas) with a half share each.

1983

ASH WEDNESDAY – 16 February 1983.



Summerhill 1983 (image: Ash Wednesday 1983002 1983 – Alan Doyle)

Status and occupancy of residents on the day of the fire.

- **No. 37 Hall Street – *Blue Seas*:** Permeant resident, *Blue Seas* owned by recently retired couple of Neil and Jean Fox. Home at time of the fire.
- **No. 39 Hall Street - *Summerhill*:** Holiday home *Summerhill* owned by Clare Doyle and Janet Galley. Rented to Croydon North neighbours Mr. & Mrs George Hume at time of the fire.
- **No. 41 Hall Street:** Holiday home owned by Jim and Serena Ryan. Vacant at time of the fire.
- **No. 56 Dorman Street:** Holiday home owned by Mr. & Mrs Thornton. Vacant at time of the fire.
- **No. 58 Dorman Street:** Permeant resident, builder, Walter Van Looy. Home at time of the fire.

PHOTO COLLECTION – directory 4-Ash Wednesday – 16 Feb 1983

- Ash Wed – North Lorne 1983001 * – Alan Doyle through to
- Ash Wed – North Lorne 1983045 * – Alan Doyle

[Ash Wednesday - 1983 - YouTube](#)

Refer to the 33.42 minute mark on the footage.



Still image capture

- Ash Wed – North Lorne 2000001 – Youtube - through to - Ash Wed – North Lorne 2000005 – Youtube

- NOTE: 1. This single image capture shows only 3 houses remaining in tack of the 12 properties depicted.**
- 2. The track to the Ocean Road from Hall Street is clearly shown. This was formally the old driveway to *Summerhill*.**



Ash Wednesday fire path – basic reference only.

Recollection of the people in Hall Street at the time of the fire.

Alan Doyle, aged 19, recollections of events of the day listened to the news reports coming from the early news bulletins in North Croydon. It was later the following day that the visiting neighbours made contact to say that they and *Summerhill* had escaped the disaster.

The Doyle family travelled to Lorne on Saturday, three days after the fires. Luckily *Summerhill* escaped the flames and was still standing and in good order. The only damage was the loss of a small seat on the wooden veranda and a curtain at the rear kitchen louvered window that was hanging by one curtain ring. All the other rings had melted. *Summerhill* was very lucky to survive this event.

On the day, everyone along Hall Street realised the seriousness of the Deans Marsh fire that afternoon. A police car drove down Hall Street with its public address system on telling people to “evacuate now and go directly to the Lorne Township”

- **No. 37 Hall Street – *Blue Seas*:**

Neil and Jean Fox were home at the time and had little time to grab possessions and evacuated. Jean left in the family car and headed to Lorne. Neil stayed to fight the fire with the garden hose. The fire travelled across from the top of the range and met the foreshore near Armistead Street, and then began travelling east along the coast. Neil Fox realised the fight was over, before the fight had begun. He had no water pressure in the hose.

By this time his exit along Hall Street was cut off. Neil ran towards the safety of the beach below with the fire now burning all the vegetation to the shoreline. He entered the surf, swam, and bobbed his way to Lorne, breathing through his shirt. He commented that as he entered the surf, he turned around and saw the fire front burning on the right-hand side of Armistead Street, when he noticed Jim and Serena Ryan’s holiday house burst into a ball of fire with the main front of the fire still 150m away. The Fox’s lost their home around 2:00am next morning, when the fire’s last assault came, and wiped out the Lorne golf club. They witnessed their home burn down from the Lorne pier.

- **No. 39 Hall Street - *Summerhill*:**

Croydon North neighbours Mr. & Mrs. George Hume renting *Summerhill* were at the house and had just come back from the beach from a swim. George was taking a shower when the police came and directed everyone to evacuate. They raced from the house to Lorne as instructed with very little possessions and clothing. They would return the following day, collect their belongings, and make arrangements to leave Lorne for home.

- **No. 41 Hall Street:**

Jim & Serena Ryan’s holiday home was vacant at the time and blew up into a ball of fire, as witnessed by Neil Fox.

- **No. 56 Dorman Street:**

Holiday home owned by Mr. & Mrs Thornton was vacant at time of the fire and was not lost.

- **No. 58 Dorman Street:**

Permeant resident, builder Walter Van Looy would recall a story of escape like Neil Fox’s. Realising the fire fight was over he raced down towards the beach but found refuge in a garage. His full story was recorded in The Age’s special Ash Wednesday publication in 1983.

- **Neighbour further up Hall Street:**

On the Saturday while cleaning up *Summerhill*, we met another neighbour who retold his story of the day trying to fight the fire.

His name was Bill. He said he was at his home further down Hall Street when the fire approached and was prepared to fight the fire head on and save his house. With his garden hose in hand and connected, he waited for the right moment to turn the hose on. When he turned on the tap, he quoted, “*I could have pissed further than what came out of the hose*”. He dropped the hose and fled to the safety of Lorne. His home was not lost.

After the fires the community of Lorne rallied together and supported all those who were affected. *Summerhill* was offered to Neil and Jean Fox as their permanent residence, until their home could be re-built. The offer was accepted, and they were close on hand through the new build and still had the support of the Lorne community. *Blue Seas* (No. 37 Hall Street) was reborn, a year later.

“It was my ONLY house...”



By MATTHEW RICKETSON

In Lorne, where at least 62 houses have been destroyed by fire, one man complained yesterday that none of the burnt houses belonged to the wealthy.

Another man, a Lorne resident for 20 years, waved his arm in the direction of several destroyed beach houses. “No mate, the rich people copped it like the rest of us. The difference is, they’ve got two houses and I’ve only got one.”

Mr Walter Van Looy, a builder, lost everything in the fire. “All I’ve got is what I’m standing in and my motorbike.”

Mr Van Looy, his eyes a little glazed from shock, said he refused to evacuate his beachfront home when asked. “I saw the fire coming over the hill but I had hosed all around and thought I could save it. I ducked round the back for a minute and when I came back the fire was right outside.”

“I ran. I ran across the hill, I ran down the hill but the fire was everywhere. I couldn’t see and I couldn’t breathe because of the smoke. Eventually I found a garage and lay down face up. There was a bit of air down there,” he said.

“I lost sense of time but I kept thinking there’s no way I’m going to die in this way. I’d rather someone put a bloody gun to my head. Finally, some firemen arrived and hosed me down I was that hot,” he said.

Mr Van Looy sought refuge on the beach along with many other townfolk but he kept to himself. “I didn’t feel much like talking,” he said, shrugging his shoulders. “I’m like that anyway.”

Mr Van Looy does not know what to do now. “I think I’ll go to Melbourne to get my bloody head sorted out.”

His sister-in-law and her husband, Serena and Jim Ryan, lost their beach house in the fire. It was next door to Mr Van Looy’s. The family has owned property in the area for more than 100 years and suffered similar loss during the Black Friday fires of 1939.

A retired couple who had lived in Airey’s Inlet for thirty years lost their home. Owners of beach houses came from Melbourne to see whether the fire had chosen to pass over their property.

A family in Anglesea evacuated their home about 6 pm and spent four hours huddled in the sea draped in blankets as the fire swept through the town and on to Bellbrae. The family — Bryan and Gloria Poynton and their children, Ruth and Simon — lost everything. “There were cinders and smoke everywhere. You couldn’t see or breathe. The fire came right down to the beach. It was like an atomic explosion,” Gloria Poynton said.

Yesterday the people in Geelong, from schools to community groups, churches and the army offered help in the form of accommodation, food and clothing.

Clare Doyle bought out her sister's (Janet Galley) half share of *Summerhill* and became the sole property owner.

1984

Summerhill went under extensive renovations for one whole year. The Doyle family worked every weekend to make the beach house more comfortable and modernized. Total expenditure \$9,549.93

Many more happy times would be holidayed at Lorne.

2003

There was a knock at the door from David Baldry of Smyth Real Estate agency when mum and dad were down on a break. David asked if they were interested in selling as he had an interested prospective buyer. He was acting on their behalf. The answer was no.

However, David would come back and ask again with a bigger offer each time. Finally in July 2003 a contract of sale was signed with Kerry Gardner of East Prahran. *Summerhill* sold for \$1,350,000.

This was the end of 81 years of ownership to the family beach house, *Summerhill*.

2004

Summerhill was bulldozed.

39 Hall Street Lorne (image: Summerhill 2004 001
– Alan Doyle)



2005

New million-dollar build was built on the site.

Since sale

It was last sold again on the 31 January 2020, for \$3,800,000.

Now with a current estimate of \$5,000,000 to \$6,000,000.

(source web site – onthefhouse.com.au - September 2022).



New build of *Summerhill* completed.

(image - [39 Hall St - Google Maps](#))

ADDITIONAL FRAMED PHOTOS OF LORNE & GREAT OCEAN ROAD – Alan Doyle collection

Nellie Morrison photos (Early Lorne Photo Book)

PHOTO COLLECTION – directory 3-Early Lorne Photo Book

- Early Lorne001 – Alan Doyle - A Promise of Rain
- Early Lorne002 – Alan Doyle - The Cottage
- Early Lorne003 – Alan Doyle - The Cottage
- Early Lorne004 – Alan Doyle - East View
- Early Lorne005 – Alan Doyle - Erskine River
- Early Lorne006 – Alan Doyle - Sanctuary Path
- Early Lorne007 – Alan Doyle - Erskine Path
- Early Lorne008 – Alan Doyle - Lorne
- Early Lorne009 – Alan Doyle - Erskine Sanctuary
- Early Lorne010 – Alan Doyle - Pool George River
- Early Lorne011 – Alan Doyle - George River
- Early Lorne012 – Alan Doyle - George River
- Early Lorne013 – Alan Doyle - Erskine River
- Early Lorne014 – Alan Doyle - Stoney Creek
- Early Lorne015 – Alan Doyle - Erskine River
- Early Lorne016 – Alan Doyle - Lorne Road
- Early Lorne017 – Alan Doyle - (un-named)

ADDITIONAL FRAMED PHOTOS OF LORNE & GREAT OCEAN ROAD – Alan Doyle collection

PHOTO COLLECTION – directory 5 - ADDITIONAL FRAMED PHOTOS OF LORNE & GREAT OCEAN ROAD – Alan Doyle collection

Anderson photos (framed)

Frame 1 – Great Ocean Road Lorne (size 530 x 190mm)



Frame 2 – An Easterly Storm – Loutitt Bay Lorne (size 380 x 170mm)



Frame 3 – A first Glimpse of Lorne (size 405 x 190mm)



Frame 4 – The Great Ocean Road and “Teddies” Lorne (size 480 x 190mm)



Frame 5 – Lorne (size 480 x 190mm)



Frame 6 – A first Glimpse of Lorne (size 470 x 190mm)



ADDITIONAL FRAMED PHOTOS OF LORNE & GREAT OCEAN ROAD – Alan Doyle collection

PHOTO COLLECTION – directory 5 - ADDITIONAL FRAMED PHOTOS OF LORNE & GREAT OCEAN ROAD – Alan Doyle collection

Various unnamed photos (framed)

Frame 7 – Split Point Lighthouse – prior 1919 (size 350 x 135mm)



Frame 8 – Stranding of the barque *Hinemoa* at Point Grey 21 January 1908 (size 295 x 180mm)
NOTE: Highlighted colour added to photo.



Frame 9 – Lorne Ocean Road looking East (size 390 x 200mm)



Frame 10 – Lorne Ocean Road looking East (size 395 x 245mm)



Frame 11 – *Summerhill* through the years – 4 images (size 550 x 250mm)

