

AN APSLEY PARK ADVENTURE

By Margaret Farrelly

Few people would disagree that the little Apsley Park is ideally situated, being so close to the town centre and convenient for a comfort stop for those travelling the highway.

How did this site come to be? Was it by design or accident?

Gill Bradshaw kindly supplied me with the following information.

“The area was Gazetted a site for Water Supply Purposes and Public Park on 11 May 1938. The area being 2 roods 27 perches. The Council of the Shire of Kowree was appointed as a Committee of Management”.

Over the years the park has been a safe haven for many children to meet and play after school or whilst parents did their shopping in this once thriving community.

I previously stated the park was a “safe haven” but was this so? Little did people know there was a hidden trap awaiting a victim; and this victim was three year old Chris Farrelly and here is his story.....

My Recollections of Falling Down the Well.

I remember Gail (Huleatt) asking Mum if she could take me to the park to play. I recall kicking the plastic football with Gail at the pub end of the park where there used to be two wooden seats. After playing with the football for a short time I told Gail I was going to play in my car. “My car” was a small depression in the ground; I’m not sure why it was “my car” but for some reason it was so to me.

As I went to jump in “the car” the ground gave away and I was left clinging to the grass at the top of the hole. Screaming to Gail as I could no longer hold on (being only three I didn’t hold on for long) and had to let go. I still recall vividly the sensation of losing my grip and slipping.

The next memory was being at the bottom of the well and looking up at this tiny beam of light. There were some old wooden ladders on which I tried to climb, only to fall through the rotten rungs, leaving me back in the mud at the bottom.

I'm not sure how long it was before I heard voices yelling to me from the top and a light was being shone down. These voices, in later years I would learn belonged to Barry Makin and Mr Ian Hamilton. The voices directed me to put a rope they had lowered around my waist. I'm not sure if the rope slipped or I didn't put it on properly, but I do recall being pulled to the top with the rope tight around my wrist.

Forty two years later I clearly recall being lifted out of the hole and seeing a crowd of people at the park fence.

My next recollection was sitting on Barry Makin's shoulders as he, along with Constable Doug McRae, took me to the Post Office to inform Mum and Dad of my adventure.

The horror of the ordeal was soon put to bed as Barry had ordered Gail to bring a double headed ice-cream from the Cafe.

Margaret recalls.....

I remember a shout from the Post Office door-way and here was Barry Makin with a muddled Chris cradled in his arms. My shock horror greeting "Oh has he been hit by a car?" was met with the reply from Mr McRae "NO NO" he fell down the well in the park. "A well in the park?" this made no sense to me. However, the story unfolded.

Many years ago a deep well had been dug and lined with wooden blocks and fitted with a hand pump to supply water to the travellers on horse-back and horse drawn vehicles.

With the introduction of the motor car, eventually the horses disappeared and the well fell into disuse. Over the years it became covered with earth and grass and was forgotten to all. The slat covering eventually rotted away and it took just one little jump from a little boy getting into his "boom boom car" to reawaken the memory of the old well.

Little Gail Huleatt is certainly to be commended for her quick action in alerting a passer-by on his way to the hotel. He gave the alarm to the workers who fortunately at that time had gathered for an evening drink. Their skilful thinking and rescue I'm sure is worthy of great praise and to those people the Farrelly family will be forever thankful.

(Gail Huleatt is the niece of Dorothy McGinty of Bringalbert South)