

# NEWSLETTER

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## Nigel Love & N B Love Industries

By Cathy Jones

*Nigel Love was an important figure in the history of aviation and flour milling in Australia. He was born in Strathfield and spent much of life as a resident but also as founder of N B Love Industries at Enfield in 1935, a major local industry and employer which still trades at the same site today under George Weston Foods.*



Figure 1 N B Love building Strathfield South

The site of N B Love Industries located at the corner of Liverpool Road and Braidwood Avenue Strathfield South (formerly Enfield) was purchased in 1934 from the NSW Railways Commissioners. The land measuring three acres was purchased by N B Love Ltd with the intention of establishing milling operations at Enfield. The site was located adjacent to the Enfield Marshalling Yards, which enabled access to railway sidings for the transportation of goods.

The principal of N B Love Industries was Nigel Borland Love (1892–1979). Love was the son of businessman John Love (1860 - 1939) and his wife Rebecca. John Love was born in Edinburgh, Scotland and was educated at Kilmarnock Academy and Edinburgh University<sup>1</sup>. He trained as a doctor but migrated to Australia in 1887 for health reasons<sup>2</sup>. John Love commenced employment with Burns, Philp & Coy in Queensland in 1887 but transferred to Sydney in 1890 and in 1891, married Rebecca Charley (d.1932).

In 1896, he went into partnership with B G Plummer in the importing business, Plummer Love & Co, which changed its name in 1906 to John Love and Sons, Founders of Manufacturers of Gas Stoves and Metres following the inclusion of Love's sons in the business<sup>3</sup>.

From 1899, the Love family resided at 'Montesca' at 33-35 Beresford Road Strathfield. The family grew to include two sons, Arnold (1894-1939) and Nigel, and four daughters, Agnes (1896-1983), Marjorie (1899- ), Muriel (1901-1995) and Dorothy (1901-1990)<sup>4</sup>. John Love was active in local community activities as a member and one-time President of the Strathfield Bowling Club and Strathfield Presbyterian Church<sup>5</sup>. Nigel Love attended school at Sydney Boys' High School, and after leaving school, he joined his father's importing business, rising to the position of manager<sup>6</sup>. In 1912-13, he was deputised by his father to travel overseas on behalf of the firm which he later described as beneficial in broadening his visions.

<sup>1</sup> Who's Who, 1929, p1146

<sup>2</sup> Fielding, J. The Golden Grain, p103

<sup>3</sup> John Love, 1925, Who's Who in Australia, p1146

<sup>4</sup> John Love, 1925, Who's Who in Australia, p1146

<sup>5</sup> Who's Who, 1929, p1146

<sup>6</sup> Fielding, J. The Golden Grain, p103

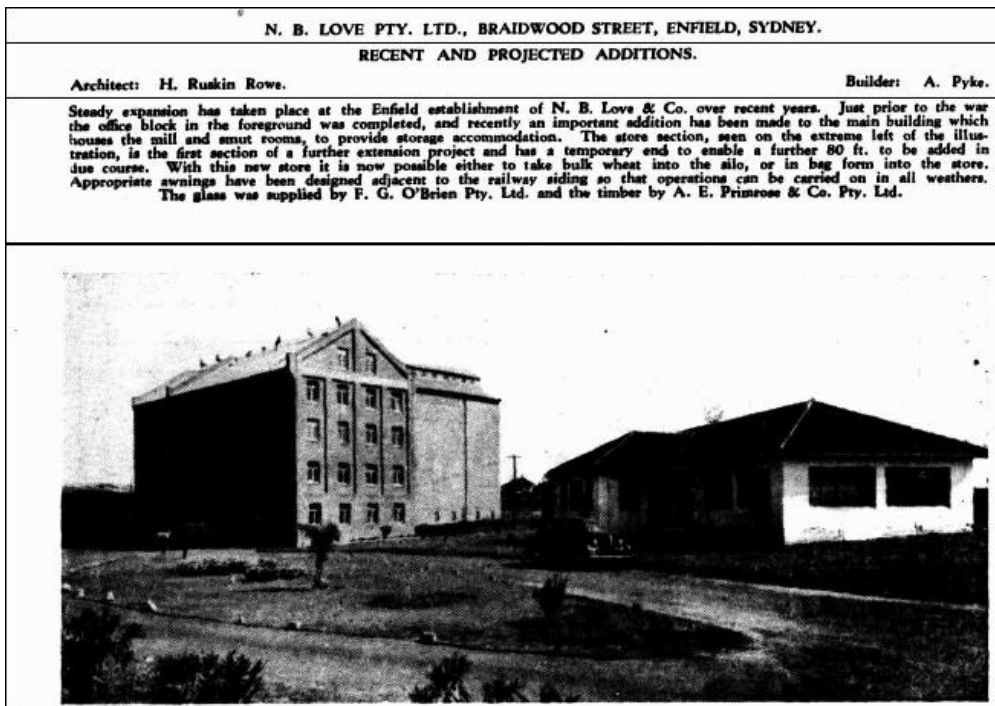


Figure 2 N B Love Strathfield South 1935 Sydney Morning Herald

Love served in the First World War as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant and in April 1917 gained his wings from the Royal Flying Corps. He was posted to the Australian Flying Corps in France where he saw war service in France and Belgium and as a pilot in the ferry pool in England, ferrying planes to the battle zone<sup>7</sup>. Love's war service is commemorated on the Strathfield War Memorial on Homebush Road Strathfield (outside the Strathfield Council Chambers).

Love returned to Australia at the rank of Lieutenant in 1919 and pursued a career in aeronautical engineering, establishing the company Australian Aircraft and Engineering Co. Ltd and a factory in Mascot for assembling planes<sup>8</sup>. He made the first flight over Sydney in November 1919<sup>9</sup>. However, in 1923 his company was liquidated due to a lack of Government funding. Later in the 1920s, the Government built the Kingsford Smith Airport on the land that had been previously leased by the Australian Aircraft and Engineering Co. Ltd.

Love married Phyllis Eloise Davey in June 1924 at the Strathfield Methodist Church, Carrington Ave Strathfield. Phyllis was the daughter of George Davey, managing director of prominent flour millers Edwin Davey & Co, a firm first established in 1865. The Davey family lived at 'Koorianda' 5-7 Broughton Road, which at one time, shared a boundary with the Love family home 'Montesca' 33-35 Beresford Road Strathfield<sup>10</sup>. George Davey was also active in local politics, serving as an Alderman on Strathfield Council from 1922-1948 and as Mayor in 1926-1927.

Following the failure of his aviation building in 1923, Love joined the Davey family business as a salesman. Love supplemented his income by making wireless sets in the workshop of his home in Croydon and in 1928, he bought a bakery business in Lidcombe, with a loan from George Davey. After five years, he sold the Lidcombe business for £12,000. In 1934, Love resigned from Edwin Davey & Sons as he was a salaried employee with few opportunities to advance in the company. Love always stressed that his departure from the business was not due to any acrimony with his father-in-law, George Davey but a desire to forge his own business.

<sup>7</sup> Fielding, J. The Golden Grain, p103

<sup>8</sup> Fielding, J. The Golden Grain, p103

<sup>9</sup> Fielding, J. The Golden Grain, p103

<sup>10</sup> Fielding, J. The Golden Grain, p103

With the support and loan from Walter Arnott (of Arnotts Biscuits) and two others, Love drew up plans to build a Mill at Enfield. Love registered the company N. B. Love Pty Ltd and purchased the site which bordered Liverpool Road and Braidwood Avenue at Enfield (now Strathfield South) from the NSW Railway Commissioners<sup>11</sup>. The site was three acres in size with an



Figure 3 N B Love Strathfield South

unimproved land value in 1935 of £675<sup>12</sup>. The site also had siding frontage to the Enfield Marshalling Yards of 800 feet<sup>13</sup>.

The Mill building was designed by W. Kenwood and Son, architects, and Alfred Pyke was the main contractor<sup>14</sup>. The new mill was constructed at an estimated cost of £4525 and opened on 14 January 1935. Including the purchase of machinery, the capital outlay for the new enterprise totalled £12,000. The central building was described as a substantial brick building of four stories with two three-storey wings on either side. The construction also included silos. The new Mill was described by the Sydney Morning Herald on 9 July 1935:

*“The mill is a substantial brick building of four stories to a height of 65 feet. Each of the four floors will measure 72 feet by 42 feet. The ground door will accommodate the power unit and countershafts. The three-story building adjoining will be commenced later. Silos will also be constructed. When completed, the new mill will have a capacity of 200 11b sacks (about 1½ short tons) of flour per hour. Working on three shifts, the production will be 190 tons of flour weekly and about 80 tons of bran and pollard. Arrangements are being made to increase this output, by 20 per cent, daily, if necessary.”*

*The mill building is divided into two sections by an internal brick wall. The smaller section occupies three of the bays at the southern end. This constitutes the wheat, cleaning department and conditioning bins. The larger section of five bays will house the steel roller mills and other machinery. Storage of wheat will be mostly in bulk, to conform with modern efficient methods of handling. It is expected that the mills will be ready for working next month, and that flour will be produced by the middle of September. Additional plant to be later installed will include a modern laboratory, with facilities for practical baking tests”*

Love showed high degrees on innovation and enterprise in developing and growing his business. He adopted the brandname 'Supreme' and introduced controls to produce a quality flour with an unusual degree of uniformity<sup>15</sup>. Among his initiatives, he developed 'Fine-Tex' flour for cake-making and an increased-protein flour 'Pro-Max', franchising bakers<sup>16</sup>.

In 1940 N B Love Pty Ltd merged with Edwin Davey & Sons and both companies came under the management of Nigel Love. At the time, George Davey was in deteriorating health and with wartime restrictions on exports, the company

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<sup>11</sup> SMH 1935

<sup>12</sup> Department of Valuer-General, Valuation List, Municipality of Enfield 23 September 1935

<sup>13</sup> SMH 1935

<sup>14</sup> SMH 1935

<sup>15</sup> Walker 1986

<sup>16</sup> Walker 1986

was becoming difficult to manage. The take over occurred with the approval of Davey, who loaned Love the money to finance the acquisition. Edwin Davey & Sons continued to operate as a division of N B Love for many decades. In 1941, Nigel Borland Love and his wife returned to Strathfield as a resident. Land was purchased at 19-21 South Street Strathfield in the name of Phyllis Love and a house was constructed in 1941. Love was a founding member of the New South Wales Flour Millers' Trade Council in 1942<sup>17</sup>.

Love was appointed Wing Commander in the Royal Australian Air Force in August 1941, Love commanded No.2 wing of the Air Training Corps, for boys aged 16 to 18, throughout World War II.

In 1943, he stood as a Liberal Democrat he unsuccessfully contested the Federal seat of Parkes. He was president of the State branch of the Air Force Association in 1945-46.

In 1944 Love acquired a flour-mill at Boggabri, near Goulburn. The Boggabri mill burnt down in 1951. In 1952 he set up Millmaster Feeds Pty Ltd to produce cereal stock feeds, a growing area of demand, at the Enfield site. An application was made to Strathfield Council for building approval to construct four silos at cost of £28,277.00<sup>18</sup>. The builder was T Robinson & Sons Pty Ltd. Additional offices were added also in 1952 at cost of £2,300.00

In 1958, the company started to manufacture bread at Enfield, introducing a high-speed dough development technique and also manufacturing gluten and starch. That year he decided to float the business as a public company, N. B. Love Industries Ltd, with himself as managing director.

In 1962 George Weston (Australia) Pty Ltd made an offer to purchase the company for over £2 million in cash. This included their subsidiary companies including N B Love Pty Ltd, Edwin Davey & Co, Millmaster Feeds Pty, N B Love (Boggabri) Pty Ltd, N B Love Starches Pty Ltd and N B Love Bakeries Pty Ltd<sup>19</sup> N B Love was a flour supplier to George Weston's, both in Australia and the United Kingdom, and N B Love was considered an important acquisition by George Weston's, an Australian subsidiary of the UK parent business. The Board agreed to the terms of the takeover, which retained the personnel of N B Love Industries Limited including Nigel B Love as Director and Consultant. Edwin Davey & Sons also retained its identity and operated with members of the Love family on the board of management<sup>20</sup>

In retirement, Nigel Love and his wife Phyllis settled at Killara. Love died on 2 October 1979 at age of eighty seven years. Phyllis died there on 24 July 1985.

The Enfield site is now titled as Mauri (formerly Weston Milling) which is a division of George Weston Foods (GWF), a fully owned subsidiary of the international Associated British Foods

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<sup>17</sup> Walker 1986

<sup>18</sup> Strathfield Council Building Register vol.5

<sup>19</sup> Fielding page 113

<sup>20</sup> Fielding page 114



Figure 4 Weston Milling Braidwood Street Strathfield South 2004

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## Sale of ArnottHolme

The property 'Arnott-Holme', 65-69 Albert Road Strathfield was sold on 11 October 2022 by the NSW Government. The Federation style house occupies a site measuring 3790m<sup>2</sup> set within a mature garden landscape. Until its sale, this property operated as a Technical and Further Education (TAFE) education office, owned by the NSW Government. It was first purchased by the NSW Department of Education in 1954 for £12,000 for the purposes of establishing a school for disabled children. Though the use of the premises later changed to a TAFE education office, the property was maintained in the Strathfield area for nearly 70 years as a public educational institution.



Figure 5 Mayor Cr Mathew Blackmore and Deputy Mayor Cr Karen Penesbene at ArnottHolme speaking about sale of the property

‘Arnott-Holme’ was originally built in 1900 as a home for its owner William Arnott, founder of Arnott’s Biscuits, Australia’s largest biscuit company. After Arnott’s death and until it was sold in 1954 to the Department of Education, it was owned and/or occupied by a number of prominent residents including Harry Jackett MP and Arthur Cozens, a merchant for British-American Tobacco Company and father-in-law of tennis champion Daphne Akhurst, whom the Australian Open Women’s Trophy is named.

The NSW Government did no community consultation regarding the sale or possible community uses of the building. According to an article in the Daily Telegraph, in 2020 the State

Government valued ‘Arnott-Holme’ at \$15 million. It is a matter of some surprise to find that the sale price of \$7.7 million was reported as achieving over 30% over the reserve price, which indicates the Government set the sale price around \$5 million, only a third of its reputed estimate.

The Society contacted Jason Yat Sen-Li MP, Member for Strathfield, requesting representations, which Mr Li undertook though without success owing to the refusal of the NSW Government to consider representations. Similarly actions were taken by Strathfield Council by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor without achieving any response. The story achieved coverage in print, digital and broadcast media also.

The property has significant historical and heritage value to the local community. It is a heritage item listed on Strathfield Council’s Local Environmental Plan and is recognised by the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) Register of Significant Buildings in NSW as an item of historical and heritage significance. Apparently it was purchased by private owners for use as a private residence.

## Historic Houses of Strathfield Exhibition

The Historic Houses of Strathfield exhibition will open on 20 December 2022 until 22 January 2023 at the Ironbark Gallery at Strathfield Library. This is a reshewing of the Strathfield-Homebush District Historical Society exhibition from late 2021. Council decided to reshew the exhibition during the holiday break and therefore, this provided an opportunity to organise a talk and afternoon tea, which wasn’t possible last year due to COVID.

The Historic Houses of Strathfield exhibition explores the rise of the mansion houses in late 19th century and their eventual fate in the 20th and 21st centuries. The stories of the houses and the associated people also reflect the social, economic and political changes which occurred over a century of development in the Strathfield area.

An afternoon tea and talk will be held on Sunday January 22 2023 at 2pm – 3.30pm at Strathfield Library. For purposes of catering and organising seating, please book online <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/strathfield-historic-house-exhibit-afternoon-tea-and-talk-tickets-489222396357> or contact Cathy at [strathfieldhistory@gmail.com](mailto:strathfieldhistory@gmail.com) or 96423145.

The exhibition is open from 20 December 2022 – 22 January 2023 (during Strathfield Council Library opening hours) at the Ironbark Gallery – Strathfield Library, cnr Rochester Street and Abbotsford Road Homebush