

Central Queensland University presents

Down Memory Lane

Book III

*A collection of short stories capturing the spirit of the
Central Queensland district*

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When the Down Memory Lane project first began in 2002, there was no expectation of it being anything other than a single project. Then, as a consequence of the extreme interest it generated within the community, we felt the need to gather and publish all of the stories that flowed from it in 2003, in Book II. In 2004, with wonderful yarns still coming thick and fast, Book III has even more stories than ever before.

How proud we are at Central Queensland University, that the authors of these stories have entrusted us with their personal recollections and how fortunate we feel to be the guardians of such valuable information about the formation of this Central Queensland region, told by those who were there and who still remember their amazing, never-to-be-repeated, pioneering experiences.

As with the previous books, these stories — all told from personal recollection viewpoints, not necessarily historical fact — help to paint the canvas that depicts the ingenuity, inventiveness, intelligence and indomitable spirit that has been a part of the foundation of Central Queensland.

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The School of Life

By Dennis Wix

On 3 September 1939 I was twelve years old and roller skating in the street in front of my home in a suburb of London. Suddenly sirens started wailing and loud speakers blared out that England had declared war on Germany.



Dennis age eight Living in London

This news was to dramatically alter the course of my life, far more than I thought at the time!

My father was in the Civil Service and following the declaration of war he was sent to Cambridge to set up an office as they were de-centralising, and moving many government offices away from London. So, in October of 1939 my father, mother, sister and I moved to Cambridge. When I got to Cambridge I couldn't get into the private high school, so I went to a state school. Although I was only 12 years old I was past their 14 year old leaving standards, so all I did was make cups of tea for the teachers and clean up their dirty cigarettes.

Eventually I was accepted into Cambridge County High School, but I was only there for 3 months when my father was transferred back to London. On return to London the government had announced the start of an 'Evacuee Scheme' for any children who had relatives overseas who were prepared to accept them.

My uncle had always said to me over the years when he'd visited, 'if you ever get the chance to go to Australia, go there, stay there and don't come back'. He had lived in Australia for three years, but his wife didn't like it and she pestered and pestered him until they moved back to England. He always said that was the 'sorriest day of his life'. Anyway, with this in mind, I nominated to go to my Uncle in Australia. In due course, my trip to Australia was organised.

I left home and left England at the age of twelve. My mother, father and Sister took me to a bus station where

I caught a bus to the train station. From there I caught a train that took me to Liverpool. It was the start of the biggest adventure of my life, the chance to have an opportunity to get to Australia! You can imagine a young boy of 12 years of age, travelling from London to a cattle property in North Queensland. The contrast was so stark it was beyond my comprehension. I didn't know it at the time, but I was never to see my father again and I wouldn't see my mother or sister again for 35 years!.

My good friend Roy Scotton, who was also twelve at the time, was to accompany me to Australia and live with my Uncle. I was one of 466 children who were evacuated from England as part of the Evacuee Scheme.

When we arrived at Liverpool Station we were broken into groups of 35 children ranging in age from 8 to 14 years. Each group of children was allocated an escort who was to look after them on the journey. Our escort was a Salvation Army lass called Miss Mackenzie.

When we got off the train at Liverpool we were taken to a bomb shelter and given a bag full of straw as a mattresses to sleep on. We were locked up in this confined area, a concrete bomb shelter underground, to await our opportunity to leave. The number of children who were sick was unreal, and the stench was terrible. The Germans were flying over every night dropping mines over the harbour at Liverpool, and we were waiting for the convoy of ships to leave, which couldn't leave until the mines were cleared. We waited for three days in the bomb shelter and eventually there was some



Dennis Wix (left) and Roy Scotton, both aged twelve, on the day they left their parents in England to journey to Australia.

bad weather and the Germans didn't come over. This enabled the mines to be swept and we finally left the shores of England,

We boarded a motor ship called the *MS Batory*, a 28 000 tonne passenger vessel that had been converted to carry troops. We had 500 troops on board as well as 12 first class passengers and 466 children. The Germans had every right to attack us, and at one stage of the journey they did.

When the convoy eventually got away from Liverpool Harbour there was approximately 140 ships. We had two escorting cruisers, six destroyers and a number of smaller naval vessels escorting us. After we left England we sailed south, and after three days of sailing our convoy split up. Half of the convoy went on to Canada and the other half continued down the coast of Africa.

One of the ships, approximately 26 000 tonnes, that was carrying 568 children on their way to Canada, was torpedoed three days after they left our convoy. After this tragic event, I believe the English government cancelled all future trips that had been planned as part of the Evacuee Scheme.

My trip in total lasted for 12 weeks. I still remember the celebration we had on board as our ship sailed down the coast of Africa and we crossed the equator for the first time. Many of us children were dunked overboard, pulled up and shaved! It sounds frightening, but it was a tonne of fun! We were to cross the equator twice more before we reached Australia.

Eventually we called into Freetown, a small town on the west coast of Africa, where we spent two days. I got very bad sunstroke from hanging over the side of the boat with the tropical sun beating on my back, as I bargained with the natives. They were free-diving up to 30 feet to collect coins that we'd thrown over the side. They were fantastic. We were also bargaining with the traders who came out to see the ship, and I managed to get myself a kit helmet and a carved elephant. I was sick for about a week from the sunstroke, as my young English skin had never seen so much sun! Fortunately, I eventually recovered, however one girl I remember was so extremely sea sick that she didn't eat for the 12 weeks we were on board the ship. Everyone thought she was going to die. By the time we eventually arrived in Adelaide she looked like a walking skeleton and looked as though she'd come out of Changhi Prison Camp. No doubt she recovered, I never saw or heard of her again.

As we headed around the Cape we stopped at Cape Town harbour for a week and all the local people showed us a terrific time. They took us all around the Cape and held many afternoon teas and gatherings for us. We were quite sad to leave Cape Town because it was a lovely place.

We then sailed to Madagascar to drop off troops. At this time a German raider started chasing us. Our boat was listing to starboard because everyone on board was watching our escorting cruiser fire broadsides at the German raider. None of the children on board

appreciated the danger we were in; we were too busy peering over the side watching the fire! It was a very exciting experience for us.

The entire trip was very exciting through my 12 year old eyes. We had troops on board and we used to polish their gear and play cards with them. One occasion is fresh in my memory. The children occupied the aft quarterdeck cabins and inside this horseshoe shaped area was a space originally used as a dining area, but the troops had it set up with hammocks and this is where they slept. Sailing through the tropics the weather was very hot, and all of the troops were from England and used to a cool climate. Almost on a daily basis, some of the troops would step out onto the back quarterdeck, just outside our cabin windows. There they would strip off and hose down with the salt-water deck hoses to keep cool. One day, our escort, Miss Mackenzie, heard us all talking through our portholes to the soldiers. To see what was going on she put her head out the port-hole, went as red as a beetroot then withdrew her head as quick as lightening. All the children just laughed and laughed. She was a Salvation Army lady and it was obvious from the colour of her face that she was totally embarrassed at seeing the naked troops. I'll never forget her face going so red.

After Madagascar we sailed to Bombay, India and dropped off more troops. Whilst in India I was fortunate enough to see the Taj Mahal and I remember thinking at the time about the contrast between this magnificent building and the enormous number of starving people around it. Bombay stunk and I mean stunk. There was rubbish dumped in the streets and beggars sitting around everywhere. It was quite upsetting to see.

I remember one morning whilst anchored at the harbour I went out on the deck and saw an Indian man wearing a turban, probably a wharf-side worker, and he was cleaning his teeth with his finger. He had the tap going and he was rubbing his teeth with his finger and at the time I thought, 'what have they come down to.' It was quite an eye opener and I can still picture that Indian man standing there cleaning his teeth as best he could.

Whilst anchored in the harbour at Bombay we had terrific thunderstorms - every night. The lightning used to strike all the hills around the harbour and the heat was terrific. Eventually when we moved on we were quite thankful.

After leaving Bombay we sailed for Singapore. When we arrived in Singapore we were taken out to a school and told we could play football in the school grounds. We were quite amazed at the local children who were playing football barefoot. How they could kick the ball I will never know! Anyway, we didn't want to play football we wanted to have a look around the place. So Roy and I befriended a couple of the local boys and snuck off on our own adventure. We had a look all around Singapore and saw a lot of the seedier parts with the local lads. Eventually we got back to the school and it was just on dark. There was a panic on as everyone

had gone back to the boat except Roy and myself. They hailed a taxi and raced us down to the wharf, and when we arrived they were just lifting up the gangplank!! The ship hands lowered the gangplank and we gratefully climbed on board the ship. It was fortunate that we made it aboard or we may have been stuck there when Singapore fell. We were very lucky.

After that little bit of excitement we went to Ceylon, which is now called Sri Lanka, and were taken to a Catholic school to be entertained for the day. This is where we had our first real taste of tropical fruits, some of which we'd never set eyes on before. I had my first pineapple, which I'd never seen before except in a tin. We



P & O Lines – Stratheden.

were given a knife and told to cut it up, but we were so used to rationing food and being careful about the amount of food we ate, that we just skimmed the surface of the pineapple flesh, so the pieces we ate were full of prickles. I remember having a very sore mouth after this eating experience, and that's about all I remember of Ceylon.

We took off and sailed down through the Malacca Straits to Western Australia. In Western Australia we were greeted and were to go ashore at Fremantle, but our boat got stuck on a mud bank. Instead we were ferried ashore to Fremantle and taken to the nearest school – which was pretty normal by this stage. Everywhere we went we were taken to a local school to be entertained.

When we arrived on shore we got to meet some Australian kids for the first time. I looked and all I saw was flies, millions of flies, and the kids, none of them had shoes on and I remember thinking, 'gosh these Australian's must be poor if they can't afford shoes!' Even the poorest of kids in England wore shoes; they had to because of the cold. At this stage I was a little disappointed with my new home country. It was hot, it was dry, there were a lot of flies and these poor kids had no shoes! I did notice however that the kids were all in good nick, well fed, well clothed, and apart from having no shoes they were better off than us.

We never did get to see Perth. When we got back on board the ship we headed for Adelaide.

Going across the Bite from Western Australia to South Australia was a terrible ordeal. Seas were so big that we were burying our bows and throwing our propellers out of the water. We were tossed about like corks and there were no stabilisers in those days. It was terrible.

There were approximately 1200 people on board and of those 1200 there wouldn't have been more than 12 people capable of walking around. Everyone was so ill. When you went down below deck people weren't walking along holding onto the handrails, they were crawling on their hands and knees. The stench from all

the vomit was beyond belief. Our trip across the Bite took a couple of days and it's an experience I will never forget as long as I live. It was a relief to get into Adelaide.

We spent a week in Adelaide and had a very good time there courtesy of the local people. Eventually we took off on the final leg of our 12 week trip, sailing from Adelaide to Sydney Harbour. Fortunately, there were no more incidents along the way as at this time, our convoy was only three ships and we no longer had a cruiser escorting us. The other two ships accompanying us were the Strathaird and the Stratheden, both P&O liners. The trip to Sydney was uneventful.

It was a beautiful sight that greeted us as we entered Sydney Harbour and steamed up towards the 'coat hanger', as they called it. We didn't spend a lot of time in Sydney, but I do remember when we arrived that the Empress of Britain and the Queen Elizabeth were both anchored quite close to the Sydney Harbour Bridge. They were using them as troop ships in those days. They were so fast that they didn't require an escort. The U boats couldn't touch them and they were considered a very safe vessel. I remember thinking how small they looked under Sydney Harbour Bridge, which amazed me because at that time they were the biggest ships in the world!

We left Sydney by train and travelled to Brisbane, where we were quarantined for 3 weeks. The quarantine building was located under the south end of the Storey Bridge and after a few days of being confined to the small area we were in, a few of us decided to go for a walk. One night we sneaked out and got two thirds of the way across the Storey Bridge when we were caught. We were told in no uncertain terms that we couldn't go out walking whilst in quarantine. They collected us and took us straight back.

After our three weeks of quarantine we were put on a train and sent up to our various destinations in North Queensland. At this time most of the children split up and went their separate ways, never to see each other again. It was interesting to see the Australian countryside for the first time. My destination was my Uncle's cattle property in Princhester Siding, 10 miles south of Marlborough, a stark contrast from my home in a London suburb.

I will never forget the day we went to Rockhampton. At that particular time, back in 1940, you would swear you were going into a 'Wild Western' town. With it's clapboard buildings and train tracks running through the middle of the street, Roy and I were extremely disappointed that we didn't see cowboys firing six guns and riding horses to the saloon. That was the atmosphere of Rockhampton at the time, and many of those old clapboard buildings still stand, even after all these years.

When we arrived in Rockhampton my Aunt Else and Uncle Rob met us at the station. It was the first time I'd ever met them. They took us around the town and showed us off to all their friends. We went upstairs to a dining area above a department store. We all had afternoon tea

and I had a milkshake, something I'd never heard of. I remember the waitress commenting on our beautiful 'peaches and cream skin,' which was quite embarrassing for us, but I can now understand what they meant.

That evening at 5 pm we took off for my uncle's property in his 1938 Dodge Sedan, a very up-to-date car at the time. The roads were all dirt and I couldn't understand why we kept stopping, opening gates, driving through, closing gates and taking off again. The number of kangaroos, wallabies and possums we saw on that trip made me think the place was crawling with them. In those days it took about two and a half hours to drive the 60 miles from Rockhampton to the property, with all the gates, dirt roads and rough roads. So, by the time we arrived we were all pretty worn out and went straight to bed for the night. That was my first night with my aunt and uncle.

The following day, my uncle left to go and do some work on horseback and we kids were left around the house, a high set Queenslander. Underneath the house, we found what we thought was an air rifle, never having seen a 22 calibre repeating Winchester. We took the rifle and went up on the back landing and thought we'd try it out.

We pumped the lever and pulled the trigger and I said, 'Gee, that's got some compression hasn't it?', not realising we were firing live bullets around.

Next thing, Uncle Rob came galloping back and tore strips off us. 'You should know better than that.' Well we didn't. We had never had anything to do with firearms, didn't know what a firearm was apart from an air rifle we'd had at home in England. We were very lucky we didn't hurt ourselves.

My aunt and uncle had a daughter who spent most of her time in the house with my aunt, so my uncle obviously wasn't prepared for two 12 year old boys running around his property. Later on I found out that underneath his bed, on top of a stump, he had a packet of detonators with some gelignite. Later we went down to an old shed down the back, and we were poking around and found some old gelignite, which had turned to a greasy looking mess. This mess was nitrate glycerine, one of the most highly dangerous explosives you can get! These were the sorts of hazards that were around our new home that we didn't understand and hadn't come up against in the past. My uncle was the sort of man who didn't understand our background, and expected that we knew everything there was to know about living in the Australian bush. He just expected us to know all about our new lifestyle and as a consequence, he didn't spend a lot of time educating us and answering the hundreds of questions we had.

Another interesting memory is the time we decided to build a raft. Back in England we had never seen hard wood and we thought all timber floated. There was a permanent creek at the side of the property, so one day Roy and I thought we'd build ourselves a raft. We spent about an hour chopping down a dead gum tree and

ended up with a lot of blisters. We chopped it into 6 foot lengths and then rolled it down to the creek where we were going to tie it together to make a raft. After our hours of effort we pushed the timber lengths into the water and they promptly sunk! We were extremely disappointed.

Food at my uncle's house was fantastic. My auntie was a really good cook, although we did pretty much live on corned beef. We used to kill our own beast and share half with the neighbouring property about 10 miles away. Whoever killed would take the other half over. We'd cut the beef into strips and put a layer of beef into a barrel, followed by a layer of coarse salt and another layer of beef. We would continue like this until the barrel was full. There was sufficient moisture in the beef to create brine and the beef would keep quite well like this. Corned beef and mashed potato with onion and cabbage was a regular meal, and many vegetables were grown on the property. If we had any spare cream we'd have a dollop of cream on top of the vegetables. Really nice chutney was made with a spoonful of plum jam mixed with some Worcestershire Sauce.

We used to keep goats but couldn't keep sheep because it was spear grass country. The grass was so sharp that it would penetrate the skin and the barbs would go deeper and deeper. We did have one sheep, which we killed to eat, and the poor animal's flesh was riddled with spear grass. It must have been in agony. Occasionally we ate an Angora Goat or a wild pig. Fish in the creek was not good for eating.

Our property was very isolated and there was very little petrol to drive the car, so we used to go everywhere on horseback. I remember riding home from a dance in Marlborough one night when I fell sound asleep on my pony. I awoke at 2 am to find the pony standing at the gate waiting for me to let him into the next paddock.

When I was working at my uncle's property I was only getting 10 shillings a week and keep. I didn't want to stay earning that much money all my life, so I used to make money out of anything I possibly could. I used to shoot kangaroos for their skins and sell them to the Denham Brothers in Rockhampton. At one time I got a fencing contract with my uncle's brother and made a few pounds out of it. I was camped on my own, 15 miles from the nearest property. At this time I was not long out from England and just 13 years of age. Dingoes used to howl all night in the hills around where I was and I used to lie there and worry about them. One night I was sleeping under the fly and my old horse and dray, was tethered to the fence post. During the night I woke up with a start. There was something under my fly and I was scared stiff. Fortunately, it was only a possum getting into the horse feed.

My uncle used to breed cattle and we had around 1000 head of cattle on the property. Believe it or not, I knew everyone by sight. When I first came across cattle I thought they were all the same, but when you see them grow up from a calf to an adult you get to know them as

you do people. Every one is different, and when you see them every day for months on end, it becomes easy to identify them by their personality and appearance.

To control the ticks and fleas it was common practice to dip the cattle monthly. We had no cattle dip at the house so we had to muster the cattle, bring them to holding paddocks at the homestead and the next day we would drive them about 5 miles to a dip, dip them, and then bring them back to a holding paddock. After being dipped the cattle would lose their unique scent, so we would spend the best part of a week making sure the calves were properly mothered again.

I used to get annoyed about this business of mustering and driving the cattle to dip, and asked my uncle why we couldn't have a dip at our house. I pestered him and pestered him and eventually he agreed, not knowing that I would be the sucker who had to do all the work. I dug a dip hole by hand that was 40 feet long, 8 foot deep and 7 foot wide using a mattock, a shovel, a pick-axe and a horse and scoop – on my own! I worked very long hours and many weekends to get the job done. Eventually the hole was dug and we got a man out from Rockhampton to set up the steel work, which we gave him a hand with of course.

Next we had to concrete the inside of the dip by hand. In those days there were no cement mixers and certainly no Ready-mix. We had a big board about 8 feet square.

There were three men and myself, a 13- year old boy at the time, and I was expected to keep pace with the three men. We filled a kerosene box of gravel and measured it out five times, we put a bag of cement on and then turned it over to our own corners then back to middle about three times dry and three times wet. Now I was only a kid and a very small one at that, and trying to keep pace with these men just about broke my back. I was flat out to lift a number five square nose shovel full of wet concrete and this went on for five days! Eventually we got our cattle dip and then we had to turn around and build yards for it. All of this was pretty hard work for a kid!

When I arrived in Australia I was already past the school leaving standards here. If I was to continue my education I had to leave my uncle's property and go to Brisbane Grammar. You can imagine what a 12 year old boy would choose to do – go to school or stay and ride horses! I chose the latter.

I've never really been sorry about my lack of formal education. I've never let anything beat me and if I've wanted to do something in life I've found ways and means of mastering the techniques and gathering the knowledge that was required. Most of the time I think I've learned far more from participating in the school of life.

Compiled by Natalie Arthur



Courtesy of Queensland State Library

The Good Old Days

(Joy – sadness – hardship – simplicity)

By Neville John Harris

When asked to contribute to Down Memory Lane, I initially thought I would just write about what it was like for a child to grow into a teenager in the 1930s and 1940s, with radio in its infancy, before electric stoves, home refrigerators, washing machines, hot water systems, flush toilets, inner spring mattresses, TV, air conditioning and computers. Then I remembered the snippets of family history told to me whilst sitting around the old wood stove in the kitchen in winter. I found those stories fascinating, so I have included all that I can remember.

My background.

About 100 years before I was born, in Dysart in the County of Westmeath, Ireland, my great grandfather Henry Harris was born to a relatively poor farmer, John Harris and his wife Frances, nee Kerr. The boy joined the Irish Constabulary on the 15 May 1854 and eventually became a promising young sargeant.

The Potato Famine developed in the 1850s and many Irishmen emigrated to Australia, Henry amongst them. Part of the motivation for doing so, was to send money home to their parents to assist in their survival. He joined the police force in Brisbane Town, reverting to the lowly rank of constable in the then 'New South Wales Police Force'.

During one of his many postings, he was sent from Maryborough to Gin Gin to arrest Alexander alias James MacPherson, 'The Wild Scotchman', a notorious South Queensland bushranger who had been intercepted and captured by a syndicate of local squatters who had been influenced by the then large reward of £250 offered for his capture.

Constable Henry Harris eventually became the first Police Sergeant at St Lawrence, where he was retired from the Police Force in 1880 on a pension, suffering from 'rheumatism and old age', at the age of 48 years. He then lived in Albert Street, North Rockhampton until his death in 1915.

One of his sons, Thomas Harris, a well-known militia soldier, was my grandfather. He lived, worked and retired in Mount Morgan, Adelaide, Sydney and Rockhampton until his death in 1946. One of his sons, Henry John Harris, was my father and he worked in Mt Morgan, Sydney and Rockhampton during his life. He was a World War I soldier in the 9th Battalion in France where he was gassed by a German shell. He recovered in England and was discharged medically unfit, in 1919 when he returned home to Rockhampton. At the age of 30 years, he married Maud Ann Sutton and resided at 3 Cambridge Street and later at 78 Victoria Parade until his death at 90 years of age in 1984.

Henry and Maud Harris had a daughter, Mary Lenore Harris in 1931; a pretty little blonde girl, dearly loved, but who succumbed to the dreaded disease of Diphtheria

which ravaged Queensland in the 1920s and 1930s. 'Little Mary' as she was known, died in 1932 – a tragic blow to my mum and dad.

My story – childhood in the 1930s

I was born on 28 June 1933 and was protected carefully by a couple who had lost their first born only a year earlier. Their efforts were obviously successful.

My first recollection was when I was one and a half or two years old. Our home at 3 Cambridge Street was a basic three bedroom, high blocked timber home with the laundry or wash house as we called it in those days, downstairs under one back corner of the house with dirt floor, galvanised iron wash tubs and a wood-burning copper boiler just outside in the yard.

Mum was washing and I was standing at the top of the stairs behind the pine child gate when she realised she'd forgotten to take down her 'soap shaker'. The soap shaker was a wire gauze cage about the size of a cake of soap with a twisted wire handle. Soap shakers were used at the sink to wash dishes, sometimes in the bath if kids were extremely dirty and of course to wash the clothes on washday, normally one day each week. Liquid detergents and washing powders had not yet been invented. Bar soap was cut into appropriate size to fit inside the wire holder and it was shaken about to produce suds. When the soap wore down, another piece was inserted.

'Neville, bring me the soap shaker from the cupboard under the sink', Mum said. The cupboard under the sink was my favourite play spot. There were pots, pans, lids, tins, enamel mugs and jugs, potatoes, onions, bar soap and of course the soap shaker. What Mum didn't know was that her favourite only toddler son had opened the soap shaker in a recent play session and inserted a very small potato, oval in shape, which looked for all the world like a worn piece of bar soap.

I dutifully took the soap shaker and threw it down the stairs with gusto. She took it and immersed it into the heating copper and began to shake it vigorously. I distinctly remember a very perplexed mother shaking the item, taking it out and looking at the sudless water then trying again and again before she finally found the somewhat worn potato. Mum never swore, but on this occasion her face lit up with laughter and she said 'You little bugger; how did you know to do that?' I giggled with pride and there was more great laughter when she shared the story with the next-door neighbour who was also downstairs washing that day.

Cambridge Street in the 1930s like most Rockhampton streets, was all gravel with grass growing along each side and latter with a narrow strip of bitumen down the centre. Surprisingly, a concrete kerb and channel had been installed to take the storm water away.

In repairing potholes in the bitumen strips, the council workers used 'tarpots', a wood or coal fired tar boiler on steel wheels. The near-boiling tar was held in a circular steel tank with a tap at the bottom and a round filling lid on top. It was considered very healthy for people, including children, to breathe the tar fumes and I recall several instances, as a toddler, of being held up to the open lid and told to 'Breathe in, love', whilst a cooperative councilman held the lid open. Mothers believed this reduced the chances of contracting diphtheria.

In 1935 my brother Stan was born and I had a playmate to fight with. I recall that he contracted diphtheria at a young age and remember Dr Wooster calling at home regularly and mustard plasters being used on his chest I think. The cure obviously worked, as he is alive and well today in Vancouver, Canada. You can imagine the great fear my parents must have had while nursing him.

Eating dirt was a favourite pastime of mine for which I was often spanked. My favourite dirt was the loose stuff around the little brown ants nests in pot plants. Kids today don't seem to share my taste for dirt; maybe junk food has replaced it.

There were no such things as motor mowers and Dad spent many hours pushing the hand mower over our lawn cursing the blunt blades.

All toilets were downstairs away from the house and were of the 'thunderbox' variety with black tar-painted pans of about 25 – 30 litre capacity. Toilet paper was torn up sheets of newspaper or old magazines (but not glossy ones) and a box of sawdust sat beside the thunderbox to facilitate covering one's deposits. The council 'dunnyman' called once per week, bringing a clean pan with a small quantity of sawdust in it, to be tipped into the sawdust box before the full pan was removed and the new one installed.

My dad once told me that in the very early 1900s when he was a boy, he and his mates would gain access to the football grounds by opening the back pan doors of the old dunnies, which opened into Murray Street and allowed the 'dunnymen' to do their job without having to go through the grounds. They'd remove the pans and then climb up through the hole in the seat, thus avoiding the 3d charge for children to watch the football. Families were large and people were poor so pocket money was almost non-existent in those days. Once inside the grounds many kids would collect empty bottles, return them to the kiosk and collect the penny or

ha'penny deposit which was charged. This allowed them to have a day at the football and an ice cream to boot.

A bit more on the 'dunnymen' – Motor trucks came in fairly early in my lifetime, however I do recall seeing the old horse drawn 'dunnycarts', drab grey in colour, of timber box construction with multiple timber doors in the side to house the pans, full or empty. They were terrible smelly things, drawn by two horses in harness. A favourite kids' joke was 'What has four wheels, eight legs and flies?' Answer of course – a 'dunnycart'.

School days

Children were accepted to commence school as long as they turned five years of age before the end of June. My birthday was 28 June so I was just four and a half when I started school in January 1938. I was about the youngest in the class and probably far too immature to begin school but there was no such thing as pre-school in those days. Mum took me to school for the first few days, a walk of about three or four kilometres, to the Hall State School in Murray Street. Boy, how I cried when she left me each day. Within a few days, an older girl Del Reid was found to live around the corner from us in Bolsover Street, so she was recruited to be my escort to and from school and she looked after me very well. I was still too young to ask a new teacher if I could leave the room for a toilet visit and I had been taught that children should be seen and not heard, so within a week the inevitable happened and loose bowels and timidity took their toll. Poor Delly as I called her, was taken out of her class to walk me home in my disgrace and she chastised me for the entire four kilometres. What a terrible lesson for a young child, however I learned



Hall School Prep II in 1937.

Some names remembered.

*Back row - 3rd from left – Alan Horwell
5th from left – Cecil Simpson
7th from left – Jim Barnes*

Second row - 2nd from left – Allison Wötley

7th & 8th from left – twins, one passed away soon after.

*Front row - Alan Bell, Nev Harris, Leslie McInnes, Unknown, John Bramble,
Wesley March, Kerrod Jenkins*

my lesson well and it never happened again.

Our walk to school took us along Bolsover Street to North Street and up North Street to Murray Street. The old brick Rockhampton Jail was situated where Eventide Homes are today. The jail's 10 – 12 foot (three – four metre) walls with observation posts and armed guards on top of the walls instilled fear into the young children who passed by, however, it probably reinforced our resolve never, ever to break the law.

The Archer Park Police Station was situated on the corner of Campbell and North Streets with the famous 'Waximo' Constable Fuge whose pushbike and large brown boots instilled fear into any youthful would-be offender in our end of the town.

It is interesting to note that East, West, South and North Streets bound the original town of Rockhampton, with Quay Street providing access to the city wharves on the river. All supplies were shipped in and out via the river before the rail line and road to the south were built. The river was not bridged initially and little development occurred in what we now know as North Rockhampton. In the closing years of his life, my great grandfather's address was Albert Street, North Rockhampton. This was only one street away from the town's northern boundary.

Our journeys to and from school continued and little shoes gave way to bare feet as we grew rather rapidly and parents' wages were low. After two years my brother Stan joined the trek and made it easier to do boy things, unsupervised by an older female escort. The many tamarind trees on the road verges in North Street were raided each day, the result of which was that the pupils of

the Hall Girls and Leichhardt Ward Boys Schools needed no castor oil or laxatives.

Each year school class photographs were taken with notes sent home to parents by thoughtful teachers prior to the day meaning that a fair proportion of boys grudgingly wore shoes on the day. Whether all the notes got home, one will never know, but no doubt many boys were in big trouble when the photos were received. Thoughtful photographers and teachers put shoeless kids in the stand up rows at the back to hide their grubby feet.

The Hall classes were organised into Prep One, Two, Three and Four each of six months duration. Then Grade One was the first full year class. To this stage, the classes were co-ed. I suppose boys were considered to be little danger to girls up to seven or eight years of age. All teachers were female up to Grade One.

Grades 2 to 7, all boys were moved over to the Boys Leichhardt Ward School. Grade 7 was scholarship grade and upon passing, kids were free to enter the workforce if their parents permitted. Their age was usually 13 years. For the smarter ones or those whose parents could afford to continue to keep a child at school, Technical College was the progression, or a Grammar School. Technical College was the forerunner of today's high schools and was co-ed. I guess girls of 13 were expected to be able to take care of themselves at this age, so could mix with uncouth boys. Some practical trade skills were taught but most subjects were not technical and all were mandatory. Trade apprentices were taught there at night classes. Students were expected to wear shoes at Tech.

Most parents were not wealthy and motor cars were in the minority. Bus fares to and from school though only



Leichhardt Ward Boys' State School Grade VII Class 1945

Back Row - From left - Roy Barrett, Glen Clanfield, Len Miller, Noel Cagney, Brian Maxwell, Malcolm Moon, Bill March, Noel Cochrane, Bill Francis.

Second Row - Jim Fletcher, Jim Berry, Brian Macmaster, Ian Patterson, Clive Edmiston, John Bramble, Mervyn Thomasson.

Third Row - Jim Leeson, Neville Harris, Ray Keke, Tom Robinson, Cecil Rycen, Terry Reiman.

Front Row - Alan Bell, Mervyn Fitzgerald, John Landry, Eric Pigram, Lester Bettridge, Lal Boson, Wesley March, Laurie Mathews.



Leichhardt Ward Boys' State School Senior Rugby League Football Team 1946.

Back Row - Bill Francis, Malcolm Moon, John McMullen, Roy Barrett.

Second Row - Tom Truscott, Cecil Simpson, Cecil Rycen, Ray Kele, John Landry, Lal Boson.

Third Row - Brian Marstellar, Jim Leeson, Tom Robinson, Terry Reiman, Neville Harris.

Seated Front - Colin ? Mallory

a few pennies, were considered expensive, so all children wanted, and all parents saved, to purchase bicycles for school kids. My younger brother and I each got our bikes for Christmas at about 10 years of age. There were about 350 pupils at Leichhardt Ward Boys' School at that time and about 300 had bikes. Bike racks covered the entire area under the Recreation Hall and Grade 6 and 7 classrooms. 3 pm brought an unholy mess of cycle traffic out of the school. No 'Lollipop Ladies' in those days, no dedicated school buses, just bikes and kids walking.

Due to the high incidence of tuberculosis in the community and the fear of low nutrition rates in children, free bottles of pasteurised milk, one per child each day, were distributed from about 1940 or 1942 for quite some years. Up until then milk vendors had delivered bulk unchilled milk to homes to be sold by the billy can full. At first we did not like the taste but under teacher supervision we became accustomed to it. A Tuberculosis Hospital was set up at Westwood to isolate sufferers and house them whilst being treated, some for several years until they were cured or deceased.

Sport was encouraged and the school had a few footballs to kick around at lunchtime and a cricket set in season. Adult males all wore felt hats, girls wore straw school hats, but boys had no headgear at all. Teachers were easy to find supervising schoolyards at lunchtime; just look for the hat. Parades before school occurred each morning with a flag raising ceremony and gramophone music to march into classrooms.

World War II

My first recollection of World War II was at the Hall School in 1939-40, when teachers taught us to play Hens and Chickens. Teacher was the 'hen' and we were

the 'chickens' and she led us out of class and into the large drainage ditches in the school grounds. This was of course, air raid drill, but we were never told that. By 1941 at the Leichhardt School, very rough zigzag slit trenches had been dug over about half the school grounds, each four feet deep, and we had to bring a sugar bag cushion packed with rags and sewn up, to school to kneel on whilst in the rocky-bottomed trenches. When it rained, the trenches filled with water and were 'out of bounds', but kids still managed to fall in, get soaked, get the 'cuts' (corporal punishment) and be sent home to change, probably facing further punishment at home to boot. After school, Waximo the cop was on pushbike patrol and booted the backsides of kids who fought in the streets or ran away with someone else's school bag.

My dad was a World War I soldier and a very loyal citizen who tried to enlist for World War II. He was rejected on medical grounds however, as he had been gassed in France during his service. In the early 1940s, 'War Savings Certificates' were being sold by the government to raise funds to support the war effort and school children were targeted. They were asked to save 6d a week towards a £1 certificate, thereby saving £1 in 40 weeks at school. Our teacher, who was also a very loyal Australian, promoted the scheme by announcing that for the first child to reach £1, he would also buy a £1 certificate for himself. This gave him almost a year to save his money. I told my dad, a hard-working carpenter of limited means and the very next day he sent me to school with £1 to buy a certificate. The teacher was dumbfounded, as I was, but announced it and lived up to his bargain. There were children of wealthy parents in the class including two bank managers but I felt that none were as loyal as my dad.

We were on Christmas holidays during the lead up to the Coral Sea Battle and week after week, radio announcements postponed the February start of school. From memory it was well into March before we were permitted to return to school. We enjoyed the extra holidays, not knowing that plans were being made to evacuate the population to the west and southwest. This fortunately did not eventuate due to the Coral Sea victory. The reality of war hit home when a popular teacher who had joined the army, Warrant Officer George Bannerman, was killed in New Guinea at Milne Bay. A service was held at a school parade.

Although never a star, I managed to make the school football and cricket teams in 1944/45 and '46. We played cricket at Kettle Park each Friday and football at Victoria Park. I recall that my grandfather, then a retired carpenter and builder, came down to watch one football match and never came back again, so I guess he was unimpressed.

Due to food rationing, the government or the school instituted a 'Victory Garden Scheme', whereby a vegetable garden was to be dug at home and the children brought the area measurements and vegetable types to school so certificates could be issued as a reward. At home, Dad, Stan and I dug, raked, planted and watered a very large area, about half of a house block, and won the competition for the biggest 'Victory Garden' in the school. Mum loved it, but I don't think the old Greek fruit and vegetable peddlers who came weekly were all that happy about it.

Some time in 1938 my dad had saved £80, which he used to buy a 1927 Chev 4 Roadster with a fabric hood and a hatch-covered 'dicky seat' in the back. He still rode his bike to work, but used this for family outings on weekends. The popular thing to do was to drive out to Limestone Creek adjacent to Yeppoon Road and have a swim, boil the billy and have a picnic on the creek bank. We two boys had shanghais (sling shots) and the creek pebbles made good ammunition. The forks for the shanghais came from carefully selected ti-trees in the creek there. Whilst there we collected small pieces of firewood for the wood-burning chip heater in the bathroom at home. The Six-Mile on the Fitzroy River was another favourite spot, or Malchi Creek near Neerkol.

The Pierce property at Midgee was another spot and we sometimes got to sit on a horse if they were moving stock when we visited. Roads were not all that good, so trips to the beach were usually two or three times a year for longer stays. My grandfather Tom Harris, having been a builder for most of his life, had bought the whole southern side of Wreck Point at Yeppoon for some ridiculously low price by today's standards and he and his sons had built a weatherboard house on the land. No power, tank water, no fridge, just an ice box – and all of our family holidays were spent there, fishing, swimming and walking in the scrub which is now the prime residential area of Lammermoor Beach. We graduated to our own tent at Kemp Beach about 1945 after the war. From 1938 on, the tyres on the Chev 4 wore down and due to the war, replacements were not available for private

cars. Petrol was rationed and only provided for short local trips. Eventually about 1942, one tube went, so the spare was packed tightly with grass to at least provide a means of getting the car home when the next tyre or tube went. It happened somewhere in Bolsover Street near the Town Hall and the grass-filled spare just made it home. The old car was put up on blocks for the duration of the war and did not turn a wheel for almost four years. The war finished in 1945 and all things gradually became available. The dickie seat was cut out and a timber utility back added, allowing us to camp at Kemp Beach.

At this stage I was around 12 or 13 and the next seven teenage years became very eventful and will possibly be the basis for a further story some day. One event that occurred when I was 16 however, had a vital impact on the remainder of my life.

I became an avid follower of old time dances during my teenage years and became quite attracted to the opposite sex. I met and danced with many attractive and desirable females and fell in and out of love regularly – my grandfather called it puppy love – however I never took any girlfriend home to meet my parents. Then, at Edna Shotker's dance class one Friday night, I met a girl with whom I would have liked to 'go steady' but alas, she already had a steady boyfriend. We danced together many times and I would always check to see if she was still spoken for. One night, months later, a mate of mine told me that she had broken up with her old boyfriend and that he had walked her home.

I seized the opportunity, walked her home the very next night and invited her to go out to the pictures at the old Tivoli Theatre on the corner of Fitzroy and Bolsover Streets, three nights hence on Monday. My pay day was Tuesday, so I was very short of cash but I worked out that with about 6/- in my pocket, I probably had just enough. I wasn't prepared to wait until after payday, in case someone else scooped her up.

Monday came and out we went. It was 1/6 each to go into the theatre so I still had 3/- left. We had a very pleasant time and then interval came and I asked her if she would like a drink. She said 'Yes, and could I have a chocolate please'. Bang! went my budget. Drinks were 1/- each which left me with 1/- and a chocolate was 1/3d!

I didn't know her well enough to tell her I couldn't afford a chocolate so off I ran full tilt, the three city blocks home. It was about 9.30 pm and my parents went to bed early so I feared they may have retired. Bursting in the back door I found Mum in the kitchen and bumbled something about running out of money and that I'd pay her back tomorrow after being paid and said 'Can I borrow two bob please?'

I rushed back to the theatre, purchased the chocolate and two drinks and got back into the theatre just after the lights had gone out. Boy what a relief.

Elaine and I went together from then on and were married five years later and that's just less than 50 years ago. I did not tell her about our first date fiasco until we were well and truly hitched!

One Teacher School

By Martin Linnane

It came out of the blue. The one thing that all young teachers both dreaded, yet expected. 'The Director-General of the Department of Public Instruction instructs you to take up the position of Headmaster of Diamantina State School on the 18 August 1959'.

The city boy was now all on his own. No more shoulders to lean on.

All fresh teachers had been told that to locate any given state school, the railway timetable should be consulted because it had the location in its index. If it was not in the timetable, there was a major problem. My copy showed nothing. The school was so remote that not even a rail line serviced it. Then, to my relief, a local teacher told me that it was on the dirt road linking the Bruce Highway to Targinie, some 15 miles from Gladstone. Not bad I thought, not bad at all.

I drove out and located the lonely building at the end of a gravel drive, perched on a low rise, in the middle of the bush. Some exotic trees, a legacy of annual Arbor Days long past, stood out amongst the gums.

There was no teacher accommodation so a local family was required to provide board. The first volunteer family had three children at the school out of an enrolment of twelve. The fourth of their children was just walking. They proved to be the most delightful people that a city boy could hope to have, to introduce him to life in the bush. When they bought another property and relocated, I was taken in by another family who were just as accepting and hospitable and my respect for these wonderful people grew.

During the first day, odd ringing noises interrupted lessons. 'It's the phone sir', explained one of the four scholarship students. 'Our ring is long-short-long.' I had no idea what he was talking about so he explained casually that the school was on a 'party line' and that each of the local farms had its own code. They all sounded the same to me, so when the phone rang, I just looked at the children and they either nodded or shook their heads in unison. The system worked quite well really until a storm knocked down one of the lines and each farmer rode along his own line to see where the break was to repair it. Being strung between trees didn't help with reliability.

While I was responsible for the cleaning of the building, the grounds also had to be kept safe and tidy and, noting how busy the farmers were, I offered to mow the grounds if they would supply the equipment. They were delighted to accept and a truck delivered an Oxford mower from one of the families. A quick lesson assured me that I was ready. I hadn't counted on the power of the mower however and once the hand clutch was released, I chased the mower around the grounds hanging on desperately trying to avoid major collisions with trees, shrubs and fences.

Studying externally from the University of Queensland in the middle of the bush was a two-edged sword. The loneliness enabled one to study undisturbed, though receiving the mail once a week often meant delays with study materials. Also, on a property powered by a generator, the lights went off around 8 pm and there was never a chance for a late night study session.

When the school inspector served notice that he would be visiting a week hence, there was a flurry of activity to ensure all documentation was up to date and available for his eagle eye. Headmasters of nearby schools phoned with the inspectors latest focus and samples of his questions to give some prior intelligence. My 'mother' prepared a sumptuous basket of food for him and me to get him in a happy mood. It came complete with red and white gingham tablecloth, crockery and cutlery – everything needed for a gourmet picnic.

He was to be transported by the headmaster of the nearest school. Just before the entrance to Diamantina, there was a ratty old wooden bridge. A glance out of the school windows alerted us to any visitors. At 8.30 the bridge rattled and I recognised the car. All was in readiness, but the car didn't arrive for another ten minutes. The headmaster apologised that he had missed the turnoff and gone further up the road before turning back. He winked as he left and I appreciated that he was giving me some extra time in case I needed it.

The morning passed quickly and successfully and when recess came around I revealed my trump card – the picnic basket. He shattered me with the news that he had just developed a stomach ulcer and could eat only dry Sao biscuits, which he had brought with him. My appetite for my feast evaporated as he chewed on his Sao's across the table from me.

During the afternoon, which was a Friday, a storm gathered and the inspector suggested that I put the car inside the school fence – a no-no then. Could this be the key to the executive washroom? He had previously asked if I could drop him off at Mt Larcom Railway Station so he could catch the train there for Bundaberg where he lived.

The timing was tight, so he had his work completed by 2.45 pm and suggested that we leave immediately at 3 pm. To our combined horror, the car wouldn't start. He turned a peculiar colour and said that he and a Year Three student would push the car, while I manipulated the clutch and steered. It worked, but when I dropped him off – on time – for the train, he fixed me with a steely stare that I still remember. To his credit and my relief, my report was not affected adversely.

I suggested to the parents that swimming lessons for the students were desirable both for pleasure and safety. A bend in the Calliope River with a sandy bank was chosen and, along with parents and families, it became a Wednesday afternoon ritual.

When cattle branding time arrived, it was suggested that my education in country life should be further expanded. After school I drove down to the yards. Nothing had really prepared me for the shouting, swearing, barking and bellowing. Animals were snapped at by the dogs till they were caught in the press, tipped on their sides, branded, tagged, drenched and neutered. No fuss, no wasted time. I knew then that I would always be a city slicker, but a city slicker with a new found appreciation of my country cousins.

Elections were held that year and Diamantina was to be a polling booth. All the necessary documentation

was delivered. I forfeited my weekend at home in Rockhampton and prepared for the influx of voters. By 10 am, one voter had registered and I was bored stiff. I brought up the tumbling mats from the storeroom downstairs, set up a bed on the verandah and settled down with a good book. I woke when someone prodded me looking to vote. All told, I had twelve votes to count after closing time when I headed off to Gladstone to deliver everything.

One-teacher schools provided wonderful and diverse experiences for young teachers such as myself. I was certainly the richer for them.



Diamantina School

Courting Days in the 1920s

By Noel and Dorothy Smith

I had the pleasure of meeting Noel and Dorothy briefly while they were in Rockhampton on a visit from their home in Burpengary. Never one to miss an opportunity, I pressed them to put on paper, some of the interesting stories they began to tell me. Some time later, in the mail, I received this gentle tale of Noel's mother and father's courting days. I have also included in part, the letter that accompanied their contribution because the story of how Noel came to acquire this little bit of history is in itself, a delightful tale...

As promised, we have put together a true story of Noel's mother and father's courting days in the early 1920s when they both lived on dairy farms outside Gympie. His 'love letters' to his sweetheart are certainly very 'tame' by today's standards but they surely painted a verbal picture of day to day rural life of that era.

When Noel's mother was selling the family home to go into a Retirement Village, she gave him her set of china canisters and spice set. Noel had been with her as a young lad when she bought them at Big Bargain Furnishers in Mary Street. He had always said the only thing he wanted if and when the family home was broken up was this set of canisters. She took him aside the day we were there helping to sort things for the auction and gave him the full canister set which she had packed in a cardboard box. She told him he was not to open it until he got back home.

Once home, he opened the box and took them out one by one, checking for any damage. He came to the last one and in it he found all of his father's letters to his mother in those days before they married. She had given them to Noel because she knew he would be the one who would appreciate having them.

They were obviously precious memories to her and she had kept them long after 'Ernie' had died in 1978. When she gave them to Noel, she had kept them safely away for more than 71 years.

The late John Dale, who wrote many historical books about Gympie and surrounding districts, restored the letters and placed them in archival folders. They have become part of the Gympie Family History Collection and a copy has been sent to John Oxley Library.

'Ernie' did buy his cream run which he operated with a covered cream cart drawn by three horses but he did not keep this long, replacing this outfit with his International truck with solid tyres, the first motorised cream truck in Gympie. Photos of both appear in Dulcie Logan's book 'Where Two Rivers Run' with chapters on Widgee by John Dale.

We hope you enjoy the snippets we have taken from these letters, they are precious memories of days gone by.'

'Courting' is a word that may need some explanation to today's younger generation but set in the historical background of rural life in the 1920s, it was generally a gentle and patient process inhibited by a distance that was accepted, which made meetings all the sweeter.

Ernest Edgar Reeves Smith was the second child and first son, of a family of two boys and three girls born to Ernest Miles and Elizabeth Mark Smith. He was born on 18 April 1898. The family had a dairy farm named 'Smithfield' at Widgee Creek, Woolooga, in the Gympie district. No one is certain just where Ernie started school, but his was the first name on the school roll when the South Side School opened in 1910, at which time he would have been almost 12 years old.

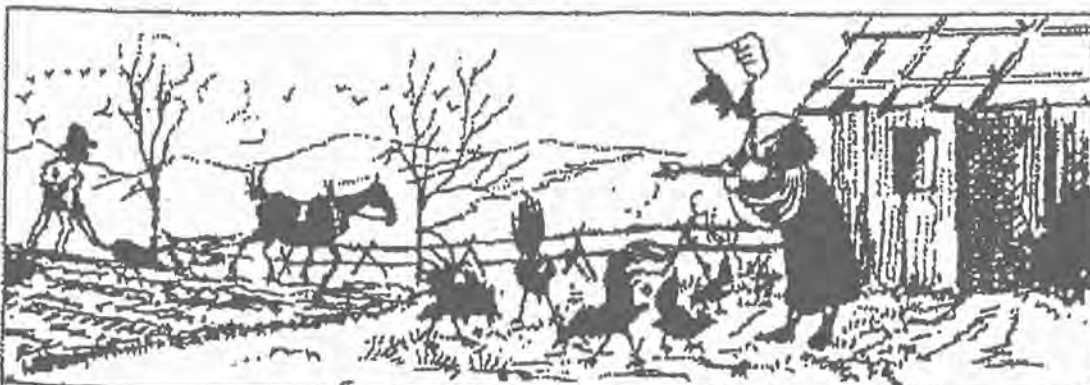
In 1910 the family was living next door to the school and were obviously committed to their children's education as 'the fencing was done by Mr Ernest Smith, the school's neighbour on the town side. His children were pupils.' Mr Smith was also a member of the first school committee.

The family later moved to the property they named 'Smithfield' at Widgee Creek, from where Ernie wrote these letters to his sweetheart Dorrie, who lived with her family on a dairy farm at Widgee, some ten miles distant.

When visiting Dorrie, Ernie would ride those ten miles on his horse, going over the mountain between Woolooga and Widgee opening and then closing, something like 14 gates each way.

Ernie married his sweetheart Dorrie in June 1924. This marriage was preceded by several years of courting, much of it by letter. Those letters paint a wonderful picture of rural life in the '20s by describing day-to-day events in such a natural way.

Ernie was a gifted country lad it seems because he illustrated his letters and the envelopes with little pen and ink sketches. One of them is reproduced here:



One of Ernie's sketches on his letters.

Smithfield, Monday, 1 May, (probably 1921)

Dear Dorrie,

I thought I would drop you a line or two just to let you know that I am partly over the dance. I think I have rather made a mistake trying to write you a letter for Pa is learning a song and Tom is knocking away like blazes pegging out his possum skins. He put out a few snares around the house and caught five.

Well darling, there will soon be another dance up your way. The Wonga Cricket Club are holding one at Widgee on the 13th. If you like Dorrie you may drive, that's if you would prefer it. You've only to say so, kid, and I can fetch a horse along and trap too if you like. You don't want to say it is too much trouble for me because you know dear girl that nothing's any trouble for me where you're concerned.

With heaps of love and kisses from your loving boy, Ernie.

PS I was dozing as I rode along the other night and Dandy let out a snort and I woke up and looked around and there was a damned old horse following along behind. It gave me quite a start til I found out what it was.

Smithfield, 23 November 1921

My dear Dorrie,

Hello! How are you? I hope you are well anyway. I have got over my weekend jaunt. We got home Sunday morning from Widgee shortly after three and was up again by half past five. We won the tennis match by three games. We had a bonser (sic) day's fun. It was hellish hot there but I suppose being up all night made it seem worse. The insects are very bad tonight. They say it is a sign of rain. I suppose they are quite right for these dry spells often break up with rain. Well dear kid I'm taking things easy till the end of the week and then I have three or three weeks of ring barking to do. My trotter has gone lame. His knee was swollen up Monday morning and seems no better yet. I hope he gets well soon. I've fed him for a couple of months now and was going to take him to Gympie races. If I do not see you this weekend, goodness only knows when the next dance will be.

It's getting like bed time now. It's nine o'clock and that's late enough for any cow cocky. I wonder if the ambulance class will be a success, they started one here, but I guess it will fall through like most of the other things they've started, so I won't join till I see how they go. Well dear girl, I'll have to draw this scribble to a close for time's pressing and paper's scarce, so be good till I hear or see you again.

Heaps of love and kisses. XXXXXXXX

Yours Ernie.

(Please count all mistakes as hugs. I hope the cows are well, ours are grand and bless the poor dears.)

December, 1921

Dear Dorrie,

Just a few lines in answer to your letter. I am answering it tonight so you can see I am not losing much time. I was beginning to think you had forgotten me. I came home Sat and no letter waiting only ordinary ones and I says to myself I wonder what's amiss now. But I can tell you I had a better time that same evening after the mailman had been. I can't think what's came over this part of the earth lately for I think there is hardly a day passes now but that it doesn't rain or else makes a show of it. After dinner time Sunday I had to go out South Side so I came out Glastonbury way. I can tell you I didn't waste all my time at the pub or at the diggings either for I left town at half past three and was home at seven o'clock so I didn't do too bad. I am sorry I left the cream carrying biss now but I think I'll have to start on my own. I offered Harry £90 cash but he wouldn't look at it but he wanted £120 for it and I close up offended him when I told him it wasn't worth near his figure. He goes and lets it go to a fellow for 120 and not even a deposit has he paid but he can't last long so he might get it back on his hands again. There is a great writing business in full swing here tonight. Mum & Bess are sending out invitations for the usual annual picnic held here. There is always a big crowd attends them. I think this is all this time, of dispatches that I can think of, so will conclude with heaps of love hoping to see you Saturday night.

Yours ever Ern Edgar Reeves Smith

(Please excuse mistakes and bad spelling, as it is not written by a scholar)

3 December 1923

My Dearest Dorrie,

You will be surprised to receive a letter from this old worry of yours but I thought I would drop you a line re next Sat. Well old kid I was home this morn at a quarter to seven and was welcomed by the sight of 44 cows. You and your mother must think I am a great beggar going off without giving a word of thanks. Dorrie please apologise for me and I'll try to make it up with you when I see you. Now there is one thing I want to impress on that little curly head of yours and that is remember what I told you Sunday night. But you said no. It cannot always be no it must be yes shortly.

From your ever loving Boy Ernie. XXXXXXXX

7 January 1924

Well Kid the weather is up to putty. It has rained every day for over a week now and I can tell you things are only middling. The fish up here were killed wholesale by the creek they were lying everywhere. Up to your grannies for dinner on Sunday and by joves she plied me with questions. I was only too pleased when it was time to go. I had a narrow escape on Red Hill last Saturday I slipped over the side and ran into a log up against a bloodwood tree and had to come up the head of that deep gully. I have just about sold my other truck. I had 47 cans on the other day so ought to have a good cheque. I think this is all Curly. Please write soon and give me some good news.

From your loving Husband Ernie.

Was that a hint to Dorrie, signing as your loving husband? It would appear that it worked as Ernie's patience was finally rewarded and he got his 'good news.' He and Dorrie were married in June 1924.

Ernest Edgar Reeves Smith, the writer of these 'courting letters' applied for Perpetual Lease Selection of 146 acres in 1916 when he was just 17 years old. He gave his address as Widgee via Woollooga and his occupation as labourer. In 1919 he applied for and was granted, leave of absence from his selection to 'earn wages elsewhere'. In 1922 (the period when he was writing these letters) he again applied for six months leave from his selection 'as I have to work on the cream run. I need the work at present to enable me to get funds to carry on with the improvements on my selection.' The letter from the Local Land Ranger supporting his application, states that 'He is a steady hardworking man and a bona-fide settler'. In 1925 he applied to transfer his selection to his father but this was refused and in February 1926 he transferred it to his mother.

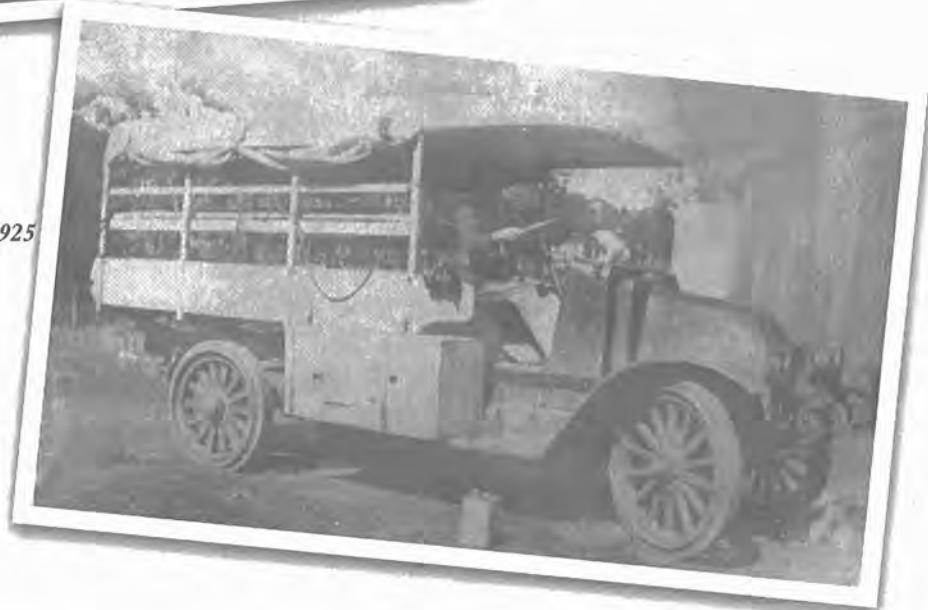
Ernie and Dorrie had five sons, the eldest were twins but one died soon after birth. Ernie ended his working life as a taxi driver in Gympie for some 30 years. Always ready to try new technology, Ernie was the first to install a two-way radio into his taxis.

Ernie passed away in 1978 and Dorrie in 1999 in her 98th year.



Ernie Smith 1920

Ernie Smith first Cream truck 1925



Elders of the Fitzroy River Basin Committee

In her book *Rockhampton: A History of City and District*, Lorna McDonald notes that Woorabinda Aboriginal Reserve was established in the Duaringa district in 1926 when the Department of Native Affairs moved nine hundred people there from Taroom. The first inhabitants were remnants of the tribes from the Taroom, Dawson River, Carnarvon, Emerald and Clermont areas. She also states that during the Second World War, people from North Queensland were brought there until, in the words of the Department, the residents were 'conglomerate descendants of different tribal groups, castes and the Cape Bedford people, and that the then present older population, was made up of removees from all parts of Queensland.

The Queensland State Archives tell us that 29 years prior to Woorabinda being established, the 'Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897' was the first comprehensive Aboriginal act passed in Queensland. With it came an era of protection and segregation, whereby Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders became wards of the state.

Under this act and under the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Police, local policemen or police inspectors were appointed as local protectors. These 'Protectors of Aborigines' controlled and managed the Aboriginal population, both adults and children, who were deemed to be 'assisted' or 'wards' of the state.

This power was exercised in regard to health, education, employment, housing and accommodation, child welfare, personal finances, pensions and benefits, training, finance, property, issue of Certificates of Exemption, removals etc.

This regime continued until the passing of the 'Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders' Affairs Act' in 1965 when the office was abolished and replaced by the Aboriginal and Island Affairs Department.

It is in the shadow of this regime that the following members of the Fitzroy River Basin Committee tell of their experiences.



Opening of the Murrie Court in Rockhampton, 16 September 2003. Showing Fitzroy Basin Elders with Magistrate Annette Hennessy.

On left with white hair : Des Hamilton. With Magistrate Hennessy standing centre back (partially behind painting), the authors of the following 4 stories are:

To Magistrate Hennessy's right with badge, Dorothy Hustler.

Seated centre front holding frame: Edna Alley

On the right at the back, peering over other heads, Olive Donald.

Front, second from right leaning forward Connie Coolwell

Edna Alley

Born at Woorabinda in 1932.

Edited from an oral tape.



All dressed up for the Rockhampton Show – approximately 1950

My family is part of the Ghunglu (pronounced Gungaloo) tribe and they come from around Duaringa, Woorabinda, and Comet and other areas. I'm not exactly sure of the total area the Ghunglu roamed. My mum, who was a Kemp, would have known because she roamed over all that area like all the Aborigines did in those days.

As a girl, she lived under the tribal system and from what she told us, they wandered through the bush all over the place, and they built a little bark humpy to sleep at night and they ate kangaroo and traditional foods. Then my grandfather took them to a place called Bauhinia Downs and I think he worked there and that's when they stopped wandering and the younger ones grew up there. When they were old enough they got jobs on the properties with the men doing the stock work and the women doing domestic duties like cooking and being housemaids.

That was of course until the government came and rounded them all up and took them to Woorabinda. These people just came and rounded them up and took them there by force. They were very unhappy. There

were about 14 children in mum's family and at least they all stayed together.

I was born at Woorabinda. I am the third eldest of 10 girls and 2 boys and all of the others were born in hospitals, but for some reason that I never knew, I was born under a tree at Woorabinda. I don't think Woorabinda had many facilities then and so they probably didn't have a hospital. My two older sisters were born in Rockhampton, so my birth is a bit confusing and my birth dates are mixed up too. Mum tells me one date and the authorities tell me another. My mother had no education of course, so she couldn't read or write. My father died when I was quite young and my mother re-married and my stepfather who was a lovely man, worked there but I don't know if he was paid any money for working.

When I think about growing up in Woorabinda, looking back now, I think it was good and that was probably because you didn't know any other life. We weren't allowed out of Woorabinda, so everything was there in this one place. You went to school and after school we would be straight down to the Mimosa Creek fishing or catching crawchies. It was a carefree life as a kid.

We just about lived in that creek and we used to do the laundry in there too. You'd splash around getting things clean and then just chuck them over the trees to dry. It didn't seem like hard work.

We didn't learn much at school. I went to Grade Four. We had white teachers. Mr Tarlington was our first teacher and second was Mr Garret. Then we had a man called Jeffrey Dooler. He came from the islands somewhere – he was great. He used to play the guitar and sing to us.



*Taken at Woorabinda, my sisters and I.
Back, left to right: Margaret and Maureen
Front, left to right: Lorraine, Me and Janet*

Mr Garret's wife taught us how to knit and crochet and do fancy work and I think we did more of that than schooling. My sisters are great at knitting and crochet and dressmaking – better than me. It was good that we were taught this at school, because when you went out to work as a domestic, you had to just get in there and work, you had little time to be taught anything.

I don't really know how many people were at Woorabinda then but there were a large number of people all living there. During the war, they even brought down some people from Cape Bedford up near Cooktown. They were nice people, very religious people who sort of kept to themselves but were great friends of ours as kids going to school.

Even inside 'Woori' the tribal system was more or less followed. If you were Ghunglu you all lived there and if you were from another tribe, you lived over there. That doesn't happen now. All the Ghunglu people knew each other. My uncle, my mother's brother who is 82 years old now, has given us a list of names from the early days of who is Ghunglu and who isn't. There is a point of pride about belonging to our own tribe because we all like to know who we are. It causes a bit of friction amongst the younger ones today when they claim to be from a particular tribe and sometimes others dispute that.

It was a very peaceful place then. Aboriginals through history were not a warring people. When the white man came and people were getting shot, they retaliated with spears and things, but prior to that, they reckon they were gentle peaceful people who in the main, got along with each other. They didn't fight each other. In my time at 'Woori', the only time you saw any violence was when one of the young fellows might have done wrong and they would spear them. They stuck to tribal ways.

My earliest recollection of our home was a little shack with dirt floors. They were better than humpies, but not much better, with a bit of bag hanging here or a bit of bark hanging there. We knew no different. We didn't know there were houses out there. Eventually, we moved into a little cottage they gave Mum. We thought that was wonderful. There was no power or water, we had to cart our water and I remember my uncle – the one who is now 82 – made us a goat cart to bring water back to the house. It had two buckets in the back and we'd take it in turns riding the goat down to the tap to get the water to bring back for household use. It was great fun.

Food supplies were given to us as rations. You went up and got your flour, your sugar and tea and your syrup and in winter they boiled a big pot with soup in it and you went up and each one got a bucket of soup. Milk was also doled out into buckets, how much you got depended on how many were in your family.

Until we moved into the cottage which had a stove in it, all the cooking was done in the ground. Mum had been cooking with an open fire all her life and she was pretty good at it too. They killed bullocks on the place and we were given meat, but we still went out every weekend to

hunt and kill goannas and porcupines and anything else we could find. Porcupines taste beautiful if they're not too fat. If they're too fat they're too greasy. My favourite food though, was damper with syrup.

Clothing was also handed out. We had these calico dresses that were so stiff to wear, but we accepted it because we didn't know anything else. In recent years I've been able to access Mum's records through the Queensland Archives and they show that she sent away to MacDonnell and East in Brisbane to ask for six little dresses for six little girls aged – whatever ages we were – and maybe a bonnet or something to go with it and how much it cost her. I don't remember them, but these records are amazing to go back through. Because of the system where she had to ask permission to do anything, it was all documented, even when she bought a bed from a white lady. Those records show her family and where they were all born in different places because they were living a nomadic lifestyle.

Eventually they got a hospital at 'Woori' and as I had a heart complaint as a kid, I spent a bit of time there. They had a doctor come sometimes, but there were lovely sisters there who looked after you most of the time. If people got really sick they were just taken away, I don't know where to – probably Rockhampton.

The Aboriginal and Islander Mission – the AIM Church was there and they played a part in our life. We were Catholics and we only saw our priest once a month but there was a white girl who taught us the catechism every Sunday. We made our confirmation at Woorabinda in the Catholic Church.

This was the sort of life I lived until I turned 15 when I was told I had to leave and go out to work. I had no choice, I had to go. I was told, 'You come out, you go to work for these people and you can't leave, you have to stay there for a year.'

So out I went to work in Rockhampton in a real house on the Range for a family by the name of McLaughlin. The McLaughlin family owned a brewery in town and I worked for one of his sons and his wife. They had four boys aged about 12 down to about four or five. I worked for them as a domestic doing the washing and ironing and cleaning. They were lovely people and Mrs McLaughlin would work alongside me, even doing the ironing with two ironing boards. They never had a daughter and she used to buy me a dress and buy me a pair of shoes and other things. They entertained and went out a lot and I mainly looked after the boys. I never regretted working for them, they were such lovely people.

I lived in and only went home about once a year but I wasn't lonely because there were heaps of us working all around the Range. Three of my sisters were up there and others from Woorabinda. We all worked 7 days a week but sometimes you would be given an afternoon or a day off. The others worked for a photographer, a doctor and a dentist people like that. They were all working for people who were well off financially. The McLaughlins

would give me enough to go on the bus, sometimes enough to even buy a drink, but we didn't get wages so we walked a lot. We walked in a group everywhere.

When I was 18, they didn't really need me any more and I was sent back to Woorabinda where I was asked if I would like to go back to Rockhampton and work for Mr and Mrs McLaughlin Senior. It was great there too. There was only the two of them and another lady who did the cooking. I wasn't a good cook, so I didn't do any of that. I worked there until I got my exemption, which I applied for when I was 21.

All through my time from age 15, until I got my exemption paper, even though I was out working at a full-time job, I was still under the act that controlled all Aboriginals on settlements and I never handled my own money. If I wanted something, I went to the Police Station and told them what I wanted, maybe a dress maybe shoes or underwear and they'd write the note and I'd take that to Rockman's or Stewarts in East Street where I would show them the note, make my selection and then take it back to the police and show them. I suppose they must have paid for it. I never had money to pay for it.

So at 21, I got my piece of paper saying I was exempted from the settlement. I don't know how it was decided who was eligible for exemption, but gradually all my sisters did the same thing. It meant that I didn't have to go back to the settlement if I didn't want to and I could earn my own money. I could do what I wanted to do. Before that I couldn't, because it would be reported to the authorities. I can't say that I resented it then, because it was natural, all our lives we were controlled and we didn't know any different way. Looking back now I see how unfair the system was, but then, it was natural. Once I had my paper though, it made me feel good because I felt like my own boss earning my own money.

The silly thing was that when I wanted to go back to see my mum, I had to write and get permission to go back into Woorabinda. Mum eventually said 'Well all my girls are out, I'm going too,' so she got her paper and came out and settled in Clermont where she lived until she passed away in 1962.

I went up to Clermont to Mum and got a job on a station and then I met a nice bloke and I got married at age 24. I met him in Clermont and we married about three years after meeting. He's part Moslem – his grandfather came out from over there. He had no experience of settlement life and when I took him out for a visit to Woorabinda he thought it looked pretty good. He was seeing proper houses with electricity and running water. Nothing like we experienced because it's all so different now, so he has trouble understanding what it was like.

On the property near Clermont, I was doing the same sort of domestic work I had done before, but it was much harder than in town. The people I worked for were not as kind and they expected you to work for every cent you got. I was never really mistreated, but out there on the properties you worked very hard. Mum said that we still had it easy compared to what she was expected to do when she first

started work and that we were better off than her, so you accepted it. You would still be working at seven or eight at night and you worked seven days a week. You didn't get time off until you came to town for a week or something.

Once married, we went to Charters Towers where my husband came from. He was a stockman and we followed the work so we didn't stay long anywhere. Even after our daughter was born, we still followed the work. She went from one school to another as she got older. We eventually settled in Charters Towers for a couple of years where his parents were and I worked at All Souls School and other boarding schools as a domestic again. Then Townsville became home for a few years and then we moved back down to Gladstone and he worked there for 18 ½ years in the alumina plant and from there we came up here in 1991. Even though he's nearly 70, he's still working driving trucks and rollers for Boral.

Life on the road was pretty terrible but as my husband kept moving I just had to go with him. Some places I cooked on the stations for the men. By this time I could cook a little and you didn't have to be a good cook to cook on the stations. Eventually I had to come in because of our daughter's schooling. She's done well for herself and I'm proud of her. We have four grandsons, six great grandchildren and countless foster grandchildren as my daughter fostered and there are all these children who call us Nanny and Granddad too.

All of my brothers and sisters came out. One brother died at age 40 from a heart attack and one sister died when she was four and another at 57 from breast cancer. Apart from that, the other eight sisters and one brother all live around here and we are in regular contact. They all have much larger families than me. Along the way I've encountered a bit of discrimination but only in a minor way and I've never let it bother me. We had beautiful parents, Dad, Step Dad and Mum, and a really strong family who respected their elders, so we were really lucky. All in all I've had a pretty good life.



My husband Graham and I.

Olive Donald

Born at Woorabinda in 1945

Edited from an oral tape.



Olive Donald

My family is from the Darambal Tribe. My father George Hayden was Darambal and my mother was transferred from St. George from a mission. Her maiden name was Moonlight and she roamed in a tribal system and went walkabout.

I was born at the Woorabinda Hospital, one of five girls and one boy. My father was a stockman at Foleyvale property but my mother stayed home and looked after us. I went to Woorabinda School until Grade Five and when I was 15 I was put on as a domestic at the hospital at Woorabinda cooking for the doctors and the matron out there.

My educational standard was about the same as Edna. We knew each other out there but we were a few years apart. I also learnt all the sewing and fancywork and all that and I've always been good at sewing, but I'm a bit lazy now and don't do much anymore.

They had houses there by the time I came along with tap water and electricity into the houses. The water supply and electricity came along when I was small. I remember the lovely fruit trees with mangoes and oranges and everything that had been planted along with a big vegetable garden. It was well organised and along with the cattle that they had which they killed for us to eat, we were quite self sufficient out there. Our parents were still given rations each week and we had good food.

For entertainment at Woorabinda, we did all sorts of things, the old fellas used to have Corroborees down on the riverbank and everybody would go there. You'd just sit down and enjoy yourself, old people and children together. There were about five or six white children there and they joined in and some people from overseas too. The white children were the children of people like the school teachers or the hospital staff but we just all mixed together. At lunchtime, the white kids and ourselves would beg to swap lunches. They loved our damper and we liked their light bread.

I was pretty friendly with the daughter of Matron Lemon from the Hospital. She was the one I worked for, for a long time. Matron only died last year and when she became pretty crook, she told her daughter she didn't want to leave and asked to be buried out at Woorabinda.

There was an open-air picture theatre and when they built another hall, there were people from up north from the Torres Straight and we used to have dancing there and everything with them.

I stayed working at the hospital until I was about 23 when I got my paper and left and went out to Yaamba where my father and mother were. My father was working on the railway. I stayed for a while with my father's sister and then got a job with Dr Ada Stewart at the Okas property. My uncle was working out there too. I was a domestic out there – that included cooking, washing, cleaning and anything else that was needed. Dr Stewart had three of us working for her. I mostly cooked and that meant seven days a week. I got around 16 dollars a week pay. Dr Ada Stewart had a house behind the old Wintergarden Theatre as well, but I was out on her property.

I stayed working for Dr Stewart for a couple of years and then I stayed with my cousin Mrs Hatfield in Quay Street and helped her look after her kids.

I met my husband Noel Donald out at Dingo when I was working out there. My father moved about with his railway job and he was working at Dingo at the time. My husband is a white fella who was born and bred in Mt Morgan. We have two daughters and two sons. We've been together for 40 years and still going strong. We lived in Mt Morgan for 25 years but I live in town now because my husband got very sick and had a triple bypass and needed to be close to doctors, so we've lived in Rocky for 4 years now and his health is pretty good.

My four kids have done well, my youngest fella Gregory has his own business as a painter and decorator, the oldest one Ronald works driving trucks. I've got one daughter here and another one down south with her husband who works in a mine down there and I've got nine grandchildren, the eldest is 20.

It doesn't matter whether you're talking black or white, children don't have the same respect for their elders now. It's something I'm pretty strict about; they know

the rules with me! I've had a good life growing up but everybody was friendly in those days, through the 50s and 60s. I've never had any problems with the white population but I think it's a long way different now. I was never called all the names they have to face now. Everybody wants too much now – they all have too much and expect too much.

Our spirituality is still a strong part of our Aboriginal heritage. We trust our instincts when we get good feelings or bad feelings about people or situations. I think there is a much stronger acceptance between black and white now and there are a lot of people who want to see better things.

Working with the Fitzroy Basin Elders, helping to take care of our land and environment is a good thing to do, and I also work with the Murri Court. This began about a year ago. Annette Hennessy, the local magistrate thought that by putting black faces in the court the young people – 17 to 18 years and up who have committed minor offences like getting drunk or pinching something – would be shamed because either they knew us or their mother knew us, and they would feel bad about coming back again. There are five elders who do this, four women and one man, Des Hamilton, Connie Coolwell, Edna Alley, Dorothy Hustler and myself.

This court happens once a month and we go in and speak with the young people before they go into court

and then we give our opinion to the magistrate of what we think would be a good outcome. If it's a male being tried, Des sits up on the bench with the magistrate and if it's a female, Connie sits up with her.

We're able to tell the magistrate for example, that he or she might have a lovely family who will give them good support and perhaps they are worth giving a second chance or something like that. Then, she makes the last decision, we don't.

We've been trialing this for less than 12 months and already there have been three young people we can consider success stories. We will have a presentation with the magistrate shortly to reward those three.

One of the boys who was well known to the magistrate because he was regularly in court from a little fellow, he's now 18 and he hasn't been back since just after we began. The other two are similar stories. Annette Hennessy is very caring and she's proud of what we're doing and that makes us proud too, to think we are doing something positive for our people.

I'm hardly home now. My nephews, the Hatfield boys have involved me in representing the Darambal people and they keep me busy going to meetings and all sorts of official openings and events. That makes me feel that I'm doing something good for our people too.

Connie Coolwell

Born at Cracow in 1937

Even though there were many other people camped around the area at the time, my grandmother was the only person with my mother when I was born at our camp near Cracow on 1 March 1937. We must have moved on to Theodore some time before 1939 as my younger brother was born in 1939 at the hospital in Theodore. My earliest memory is of our old hut in Theodore, not far from the Railway Station. I started school in Theodore. My schoolteacher's name was Miss Smith who later married one of the local graziers Mr Gunn.

My mother was Ivy Little and my father Claude Anderson and Theodore was a good place to live as I had heaps of friends who always said hello to me and my mum and dad, and Mum was always addressed as Mrs Anderson. My father was well known in the country for his working skills. He was a very skilled horseman and ring barker. Both Mum and Dad also picked cotton and I can recall my mother was one of the first people in the district to pick 200 lb. in one day.

Between the both of them, they ring barked nearly all the country closest to the Town. Even when Dad did work a bit farther out of town, we still had to ride our horses to school. As far back as I can remember, we had Pansy, Creamy, Betty and a pony we called Fireater. Dad also worked on the council, or as they called it then the Commission, and they built all the canals that are still



Connie Coolwell

there today. One canal ran right past our hut and on the other side was a vineyard.

Mr McAllister was the owner of the vineyard and we would get grapes for next to nothing. One day however, my two eldest brothers jumped over the canal and fence and started eating grapes from the vine. My father came home and saw them and gee, they got a good hiding. He really flogged the both of them.

I don't ever remember being hungry through my childhood. We did have a lot of bush tucker – wallaby, scrub turkey, porcupine, pigeons and sometimes young kangaroo. We never ever had emu as it was Dad's totem and we always knew if we ever saw emus, we were not allowed to do anything to frighten them or even acknowledge their presence. We just had to be quiet.

One day when I was 10 years old, Dad just came home and told Mum to pack up, we were going to Baralaba and we were gone in a couple of hours. I can't remember exactly how long it took us to get to Baralaba in the buggy with Pansy and Creamy pulling it. We went straight to our father's sister, Aunty Connie (who I was named after) and Uncle Bob Martin's. They were well known and well respected people who had lived in Baralaba all their lives. I used to think that my father was Ghunglu but once we were with Aunty Connie, she and all the old fellas used to talk lingo and I learned we were Kanolou tribe. Us young ones were not included in the talks of old times so I never learnt the lingo. Living with Aunty Connie was the only time I ever heard it spoken.

Baralaba wasn't any bigger than Theodore and I soon made friends. One incident really sticks in my mind from that time. It happened only about two weeks after we arrived. A car load of people that we knew were from Theodore went past Aunty Connie's on the way to Woorabinda. Aunty Connie said to Dad that the police were sending a lot of people to Woorabinda. Dad said he had heard it up-town in Theodore and that's why he moved the day he did. Then he sat down and cried.

We knew nearly all the people who were sent and they were not loafers, they were all good workers.

I still wonder why he ran away from Theodore. We always had our own place and he certainly didn't drink much in those days.

We didn't stay that long in Baralaba because there wasn't very much work around but Mum did work at the hospital for a while, I can't remember how long. I liked school there too. I was in Grade Four and I do remember feeling pretty clever because Grade Four used to read out of Grade Five readers.

I have only found out over the last eight or nine years that Dad was born at Woorabinda, or as it was then, Coonalileora Station. He never talked much about his childhood. Dad was quite a bit older than Mum and old records from the Archives that I have been able to access recently show that before he married, the people he worked for applied for exemption under the act, on his behalf. I've also acquired copies of old bank books showing money held in trust for him by the government,

Some of the archival records about my father, Claude Anderson.

Report on Application by Half-caste for Exemption from the Provisions of the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of Sale of Opium Acts.

QUESTIONS.	ANSWERS.
Name of Applicant	Claude Anderson
Sex	Male
Age	about 50 years
Where born	Coomaloolaroo Station, Via Durranga
State	Queensland
Nationality of parents, father	British
" " mother	Half Caste Aboriginal
Were parents legally married?	No
Is applicant married (legally)?	Single
If so, what is nationality of wife (or husband)?	-----
Has applicant any children? If so, what are their ages?	No
Does applicant (or his family) habitually associate with aboriginals?	No
Does applicant drink?	No not to my knowledge
Or, procure it for other aboriginals?	No
Is applicant educated, to what extent?	Yes a little
Is he (or she) intelligent enough to protect himself in business dealings?	Yes, I consider he is able to manage his own affairs
Is he (or she) thrifty, and does he (or she) understand the value of money?	Yes he is very thrifty, and quite understands the value of money.
What amount has he (or she) to credit in the Savings Bank?	£75--14--5.
Does applicant live in a civilised manner and associate with Europeans usually?	Yes
Is applicant of good character, steady in employment, and industrious?	Yes
Is it applicant's own wish to be exempt?	Yes

A report on his application for exemption

Pro 372
05907 18 JUL 1929
12th July 1929.
REGISTRAR
QUEENSLAND

Re:- Half-caste aboriginal Claude Anderson, applying for Exemption from the Aboriginal Protection Act.

Sir/

I wish to advise that the Half-caste aboriginal boy Claude Anderson has been known to us for the past 44 years. He is a good class of boy, sober and industrious. He has lived and worked in and around this District all his life. I do not know any reason why he should not be granted Exemption.

Report on Application has been completed by me and is attached herewith.

J. Mc Kenna.
Protector.

Tne/
Chief Protector of Aborigines.
BRISBANE.

Off. Under Secy.
Home. Dept.
Exemption recommended.
Chief Protector.
18th July

649
7577/29
18 JUL 1929
ET2

A letter in support of a 'good clean boy, sober and industrious' which went through a number of hands over a period of two weeks.

that of course he never received. He taught the boys all about horses and mustering cattle and some tracking and other bush craft skills that he must have learnt when he was young.

The original request for exemption letter from his Employer was dated 15 June 1929 and reads :

To the Hon J C Peterson, MLA Home Secretary, Brisbane.

Dear Sir,

I have a boy called Claude Anderson and he wants me to get him exempted from the Protector of Aborigines. This boy is well know in our district and quite a good sober boy at all times. He has been in my employ for many years and also E H Dawson. Trusting you will do your best in this matter. Yours faithfully, J H B Dawson.

That prompted a letter from Mr Peterson to J Bleakley Esq, the Chief Protector of Aborigines on the 20 June asking for his early attention. This was impressive speed, but the letter also asked for the reason for the inordinate delay re another applicant for exemption which had been forwarded some months previously.

A memorandum from the Chief Protector then asked for the necessary reports, which were done and resulted in the exemption being issued on 29 July.

As well, on 9 September 1929, Mr Kenna from the Office of Protector in Baralaba, issued a memorandum to the Chief Protector in Brisbane, stating that 'this boy' is now getting married. He wishes me to hand over his banking account to him. Kindly advise me if I will now close his account and hand over the full amount to him. The reply was: Advise yes, but endeavour to get him to place it in a savings bank account in his own name. Apparently Claude never received this money.

Dad got a job ringbarking over at Kokoatunga and we were there for a while and then there was a cattle sale and Dad got a droving trip to Eidsvold. I can't remember exactly how many, but I do remember it was over a hundred head. So with only Chook who was 12, Bob who was about 10 and Mum driving the buggy and one other man whose name I can't remember, we left for Eidsvold. This other man only came as far as Camboon. The rest of the trip to Eidsvold was Dad and Chook and he would let Bob ride for a couple of hours and then make him get back in the buggy. Sometimes Mum would ride and let Chook drive. Anyway, he never lost any cattle and we got to Eidsvold with the lot.

When we did get to Eidsvold and the cattle were yarded, we made camp outside of the town on the bank of the Burnett River in tents and the Eidsvold

Station homestead was on the other side. We were all right for a while, then we moved into town and stayed with our cousin, Dad's nephew and his wife, and she and Mum took all us kids and went peanut picking in Mundubbera. There were our six - Beryl, Vernon, Chook, me, Bob and Iris, and her eight - Mason, Lewis, Syd, Tom, Edna, Lizzie, Tim, Margaret, Joyce and Albert. Later on she had two more, Joan and Leslie.

I have never heard of, or seen a woman who could work like my mother, or could do the things she could do. She worked all her life and only lived on the pension for about three years before she died. She never owed anyone a cent. She died in 1977 never owing the government anything here in Rockhampton.

Dad had taken my oldest brother Vernon down to Brisbane from Theodore before we left there. He was to train to be a jockey with Mr WJ Shean. Vernon was a really good boxer and fought Allan Gibbands for the Golden Gloves in Brisbane in 1947. I think he lost, so Dad took him to Jimmy Shean to train as a jockey but he got too heavy. While we were in Mundubbera, Vernon came back to join the family.


Office of Chief Protector of Aborigines,
South Brisbane. 29-7-29.

Memorandum:
PROTECTOR OF ABORIGINALS,
Baralaba

In accordance with your recommendation of 15-7-29
a Certificate of Exemption from the Provisions of the Aborigines
Protection Act has been granted to CLAUDE ANDERSON
of Baralaba and is hereby attached.

Kindly deliver it to the owner and obtain an acknow-
ledgment, which should be returned to this Office.

Chief Protector of Aborigines.

RECEIVED
29/7/29

Approval, 4 days after recommendation.

Local Protector of Aborigines Baralaba at 24/7/29

Name	Account No.	Balance	Notes
Oscar King	1-15-15	0474	
Cyril White	5-4-4	017524	
Ray White	0-2-0	017556	
Alex Deane	4-10-0	018238	
Joker	6-0-1	017550	
Albert Albury	11-2-1	017559	
Stanley White	42-11-10	017555	
Samie Albury	4-15-4	017557	
Leslie Albury	3-15-1	017558	
Claude Anderson	00-3-11	018069	
Larry March	9-12-0	04742	
Wollie McGullough	540-0-3	018167	
Frank White Jr	7-10-20	018355	

Balance in Savings Bank 20/6/29

2715-1-5

Dr 727-6-5

Cr 12-0-0

Balance 719-1-5

29/7/29

A listing of bank accounts held in Rockhampton for local aborigines in 1929.

We soon got sick of the peanuts and my Uncle Eddie Little who also turned up in Mundubbera said there was plenty of work in Gayndah, so away we went. Vernon thought it was just great travelling around in a buggy and to see his old horse Creamy again. I don't remember where Dad was, because he didn't come to Gayndah until much later when Mum got an old hut up near the hospital where she had a job as laundress. She stayed there for four years.

I left school half way through Grade seven and I worked for a while for people who lived near the hospital who had four very cheeky kids. I only stayed for a while because they were very rude to me. I worked at the café but Mum didn't like me working at night because there was no one to take me home and she couldn't come and meet me all the time.

It was good to see old Theodore again. Heaps of people always saying hello to Mum and being really nice. Dad was out ringbarking again, this time for Mr Neville Hewitt who still says hello to us when he sees us now in Rocky.

I came to Rocky when I was 16 and got a job with Mrs Daisy Power, my eldest sister's employer prior to her marriage in Gayndah. I worked for Mrs Power until I was 18 then I worked at the Tannachy, now called St Johns Hospital, for about 2 years.

I married when I was 24 and, after 21 years of total unhappiness, I left

Mum came to live in Rocky around 1953/54. She got a job straight away but she did start drinking and going out. She never missed work – she worked at the Mater for ages and then got a job with Dr and Mrs D P Kearns who had a dental surgery in Denison Street. She was there for nine years. Dad passed away in 1973 and Mum in 1977.

I worked a number of jobs over the next few years some in Brisbane and some in Rockhampton – Email in Stanley Street from '73 – '75 and then the Mater Private up until '82. Unemployed at age 45, I enrolled in a counselling course run at Biala in Roma Street in

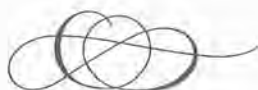
Brisbane and this led to a job in a Rehabilitation Centre at the Jadio Hostel, run by the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Alcohol Service, which worked toward alcohol and drug rehabilitation.

Although I enjoyed my work, internal infighting from people with few skills who were there for their own gain, made my life miserable through 1983 – 1985 and I left the counselling and took up work as the weekend cook. Eventually though, I went back into some counselling and with a new director in 1990, I went back full-time and in 1994 became the Program Officer. Ours was the first organisation to go into the Women's Prison at Boggo Road, which was under the leadership of Lil Watson. We worked hard to give people the skills they needed to change their own lives. Through 1996 and 1997 I was very sick for a whole year and a half with physical pain every day through that period. I came back to Rockhampton around 1998.

When I attended the counselling course at Biala, I didn't really understand what I was getting in to. Nearly all the other people in the course were a whole lot younger than me. I was the only person there who didn't have a problem with alcohol. I never drank. I was about 30 years old when I had four cups of beer and boy, was I sick! When we were teenagers, 'nice young ladies' didn't go anywhere near the pub.

I suppose what I had to learn was acceptance that there were people who just let alcohol take over their lives. I guess I just wanted every one of my relations to stop drinking. My Auntie Mona and I were the only two of a very large family who didn't drink. Auntie Mona lived until she was nearly 90 and apart from my couple of years of ill health, we were very healthy people.

I retired aged 58 in 1995 and I'm in Rockhampton working with other Fitzroy Basin Elders. I try hard using the skills I have acquired over the years, through things like the Murri Court process and in other ways, to give back to my people and make a difference.



Dorothy Hustler

Born Rockhampton 9 March 1941



Dorothy Hustler – 1994

My mother's name was Kathleen Black and she was a Kanolou person from around the Comet area and her mother Roseanne married an Englishman George Henry Black. He came out from Plymouth in England, around 1800 and he used both draught horses and bullocks to drive his bullock trains. He was a lovely old man; I used to cut his hair and give him a shave when he was older. My grannie died much earlier than he did and I don't have any memories of her. My sister tells me she always wore a hat.

My father Robert Robinson came from up around Nebo or Collinsville way. He was a Birri Gubba man whose father was Japanese. He was a very good dad and he lived until he was 82 years old. He and his brother and sisters were taken away from their mother when they were very young and put on different cattle stations. There they took the names of the Station owners, that's where Dad got Robinson from, his brothers and sisters are called Twist and Hegarty. He was aged somewhere between seven to nine and was never paid money for working, he was just given a blanket and shirt and pants. The older workers were also given tobacco.

He taught himself to read and write somehow – he always had a dictionary nearby – and he had beautiful

handwriting. Even after losing all four fingers on his right hand in a sawmill accident at Yaamba years later, he taught himself to use his left hand and his writing didn't change. He never gave up on anything.

When he was old enough to leave the cattle station he went to drive trucks and when the war was on, he worked at the Lakes Creek meat works in the Box Shed. He lost a little finger from his other hand while he was there and I remember as a kid, whenever anyone asked what happened to his finger he would tell them that he lost it in a can of meat.

When dad was at Eventide, the Robinson family had grandchildren at St. Brendan's and they would come up to visit him. They were a good family and he said that they always treated him well.

I was born at the old Lady Goodwin Hospital in Rockhampton where the breast screen place is now and we lived in Stamford Street in North Rockhampton. We had lots of friends both black and white. I had three brothers and four sisters but only one sister Margaret and one brother William Robert are still living. William was a very good Rugby League player here and had the nickname of Sugar Ray Robinson. People would go just to see him play.

I went to St. Mary's School in Nobb Street up until Grade Seven but I hated school and often would not go. I was around 15 or 16 when I got a job at Lotus Creek up near Marlborough minding a couple of little girls. I remember one time while I was up there, there was a Main Roads camp there for quite a long time and I got friendly with one of the ladies. She invited me to tea one night and I got permission from the people I worked with, to go. She served up this delicious stew and I ate it all up. Then she told me it was made from pigeons – I felt really sick after that.

I had a good childhood in Rocky. Kanaka Town was a favourite place to be; we'd play rounders and cricket on the Creek Street flats and go swimming in Moore's Creek where there was a big tree to dive from. Moore's Creek was clean then and had plenty of sparkling running water. It was so good; we would take cordial and cups and just take the water from the creek. We'd pack up sandwiches or boil the billy and have a great time there. At night we'd have a singsong under the mango tree around a big fire.

Although we were Catholics, the church at Kanaka town was a favourite place of mine as a kid and I would plead with my mother to go. One of its attractions was that they served great cake after Sunday School but I liked all the singing and can still remember one of the songs – 'Dropping, dropping, hear the pennies fall, they are all for Jesus, He can have them all.'

My teenage years were taken up with sport. We were a very sporting family and I represented Rockhampton in netball, cricko and vigaro and played softball, basketball, indoor cricket and I also played soccer for Nerimbera. We were living in Waterloo Street then and thought nothing of walking to Victoria Park for a game.

I loved dances and in the 1960s there was a favourite nightclub at the Lionleigh Tavern we used to go to. Dances, the pictures and the drive-in were the things we used to do. Thomas had a motorbike and we went up to the top of Mt Archer on it one time. It wasn't long after a fellow had killed himself halfway up there. Coming down, we got to about that spot and I heard this wailing coming from somewhere, that scared me to death. I think that place is spooky now.

I worked at a number places over the years, waitressing at Pt Alma; domestic work at Slade School in Warwick and at the Longreach Hotel as a housemaid and waitress. In 1961 I was working at the Lakes Creek meatworks when I met my husband Thomas. Thomas was not Aboriginal and we faced some opposition from a lot of people, but we married and eventually most of them came round. We had two children – John and Dianne and I was pregnant with our third child Thomas when my husband was killed in a car accident in 1967. It was a very difficult time but family helped me and we got through it.

I had another son Raymond and all four of my children are doing well. Dianne is working in administration with the Fitzroy Basin Elders, John has been a theatre orderly at the Mater Hospital for 18 years, Thomas is a meat worker and Raymond is a meat worker in Mackay. I now have five granddaughters.

I enjoy the work I do with the Fitzroy Basin Elders Committee. I was elected to the Committee about three years ago and I've learned a lot. I think the work we do with the monthly Murri Court is doing some good.



*Dorothy with her family :
Standing l to r. Raymond, Thomas, John, Daryl (Dianne's partner)
Front : Dianne, me, Robyn (Thomas's partner)*



He Will Direct Your Path

By Irene Currie (nee Fisher/Saltner)

While not originally from Central Queensland, I've spent the last fifty years living here.

I was born in Gayndah on 17 October 1928. All of my school years were spent at Eidsvold and Mundubera and my childhood memories are still very vivid. My father Percy was a drover, so we had horses and I had two of my own to look after as well as two cows to milk and lots of fowls. My mother Rachael made sure we all had our chores. For fun there were two deep waterholes where all the children in our area went to swim.

The church we went to was made of hessian, which was painted white and the seats were made of logs cut in half and put between two forky stumps. It was only attended by Aboriginal people. The old people made sure it was kept spotless. Once a month the minister would come up from Branch Creek and the meetings were great, with lots of singing from relatives who lived nearby. Later on it became an A I M (Australian Inland Mission) Church.

Dad had bought land at Eidsvold so we had our own place. We needed it to keep the horses he used for work. My parents and grandparents spoke in language and I can still remember enough to understand a conversation I

think. Their languages were Goreng and Wakka Wakka. Although we never lived under a tribal system, many of the old ways were still adhered to especially by my grandmothers and aunties. There was one aunt in particular who was very strict. There were lots of things we couldn't do when they were around like walking in front of older people; you had to go around the back of them; you couldn't sit on a table and they were horrified if a woman sat on any bed other than their own.

I had two sisters and three brothers and we survived, although times were often tough. We couldn't afford to buy firewood so we had to go out and find it. Neighbours a couple of doors away ran cows and grew grapes and I would make pocket money by delivering milk before school every morning and in the afternoons, I delivered their grapes to a shop. Some of us used to go cotton picking with an aunty. We would harness up the old buggy mare and spend time living out in the bush. We thought it was great fun.

Although I don't understand why, our family was never rounded up and sent to a reserve. My grandparents were living in Taroom when that began to happen and a great



Eidsvold School 1939

Back Row – Lola Chapman, Hean Pott, Rene Caban, Berice Hampson, Margaret Pott, Jane Ferguson, Joan Harris, Thora Hampson, Cecilia Nugent, Maud Brown, Agnes Dunne, Carmel Hawkins.

Second Row – Queenie Carter, Daphne Ryan, Mary MacCallum, Hannah Quinn, Dorothy Blundell, Clive Johnson, Emma Dunne, Gwen Kirkley, Angella Dimitrios, Margaret Marks, Berenice Hampson, Lynette Williams, Sheila Kirkley, Ailsa Wilson.

Third Row – Pat Blundell, Annie Rashleigh, Jean Rashleigh, Eileen Garonzi, Winsome Evans, Valmai Walsh, Daphne Rogers, Nita Kirkley, Yvonne Smith, Eileen Bayles, June Luckel, Mary Wilson, Irene Saltner, June Quinn, Dulcie Horn, Vera Wilson.

Front Row – _____ Chapman, Edna Bayles, Annie Dimitrios, _____, _____, Barbara Bennett, _____ Elaine Hawkins, Hoyce Ryan, Pam Simper



My brothers Norman and Howard and sisters Betty, Barbara and me. Taken at Mundubera when I was around 10 or 11.

number of their friends were taken, but they were not. It's never been explained to me but I have come to the conclusion that those of us who were gainfully employed were left alone.

When I left school at about 15, my first job was on a station outside Winton. My job was to look after a three-year-old boy. The family I worked for were good people. The father was related in some way to Caroline Chisholm. Later the station was sold and we all moved with the same family to Beechmont in Queensland, which is not far from the Queensland and New South Wales border. On this place there were about four men and a housekeeper and another girl to help with the laundry and other jobs around the house. As well as still looking after the boy, my job was to help the girl and look after the goats. The goats were kept for their milk, which was sent up to Southport for babies who had an intolerance to cow's milk.

I worked for a while at the Mater Private Hospital in Brisbane when I was around 19 years of age. I loved going to the dances there and it was at one of those dances I met my husband Bill Fisher. He was from Cherbourg and when we married we moved back there and stayed for a few years and had three of our children while there. Looking back, I have to say that I've lived in better places, but we were only there for a relatively short period of time and I managed to keep myself remote from the difficulties others were experiencing. In the early 50s we moved to Central Queensland.

Because of a minor misdemeanour of my husband's, living at Woorabinda was imposed on us and we were there for about ten years before moving to Edungalba where my husband worked for the railway. There were certainly restrictions living at Woorabinda and you had to get permission to do a lot of things, but I managed to just fit in and it didn't bother me very much. We had three more children at Woorabinda. We did have to get our exemptions before moving to Edungalba.

We eventually had 11 children. Joan, Herbert, Denise, Howard (dec), Lesley, Elizabeth, Garry, Frank (dec), Coral, Alan and Pamela.

In the early 1970s when the children were older and in high school, we moved in to Rockhampton. There I became involved with the A I M Church where I taught Sunday School; I was involved with Cottage Meetings and outreach work with my dear friend Winnie Munns. We are still involved in Ladies Meeting and church conferences and anywhere we can give assistance.

After my husband died, a dear missionary friend and I went on a trip throughout New South Wales and Victoria. She was Molly Fairfax. We drove all the way and

had a wonderful trip over about a two-month period. All the way round, we only stayed in a motel twice because my friend knew people at all the other places we visited and we stayed with them.

Another time, another friend and I drove up to the Northern Territory for a couple of months visiting many places. My friend was Matron Elsie Lemon who was the matron at the Woorabinda Hospital for such a long time. On this trip we were able to stay with missionaries we knew that were connected to our church.

I was involved in tuck shop at Park Avenue and Glenmore High where my children attended school and the Girl Guides at Park Avenue. I still run into some of them at times.

I've been involved in the local Community Radio Station 4YOU where I have been a volunteer presenter for eleven years and still help out if needed. I visit the Base Hospital as a Pastoral Care Worker each week along with other Aboriginal people from the different churches.

I am now married again to a bloke I knew when I was nineteen and going to those dances in Brisbane. After a gap of about forty-seven years, the phone rang one day out of the blue and this voice said, 'This is Alex Currie. Do you remember me?' We've been married now for about six years.

A son and a couple of daughters still live in Rockhampton while the others are scattered around in Maryborough, Townsville and Brisbane etc. I've lost count of how many grandchildren I have and they are now all starting to have babies of their own. While I've had many ups and downs in my life, I'd say the good times outweigh the bad and I've been very fortunate to have met some dear and wonderful people in my lifetime.

A verse in the Bible, which has helped me immensely over the years is:

Proverbs 3:5:6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path.

Bringing Home The Bacon

By Herb Turner.

Edited from an oral tape.

I'm 83 now and it's a bit hard to remember a lot of details from my life when I was very small, but I was born at Childers and then, when I was around four or five we came to Machine Creek at Mt Larcom to live. One episode from that time sticks in my mind because as a kid, it was hilariously funny. There was a well-patronised dance nearby and everyone would arrive in their sulky. Someone took the horse out of the shaft of one of these sulkies, poked the shafts through an open fence and then took the horse around to the other side and harnessed it again. You can imagine what happened when the owners came to leave at the end of the night! There were five boys and three girls in our family and born in 1920, I was about the middle of the boys. When it was time for me to go to school, I went to live with one of my sisters, Dorrie who had married and was living on a farm at Bajool. We moved in to town later and most of my schooling was done at Depot Hill, but I remember those early school days at Bajool quite well. I think now that the life my sister and her family had, was a pretty tough life. It was a dairy farm and they milked all the cows by hand and separated the cream with a hand-turned separator. They only had tank water and water was always a problem, which suited me as a small boy, because it meant that you never really had a real bath, in fact they didn't have a bathroom on the house. Once a week, using a big tin dish in the kitchen, you'd have a 'bath', which was only a proper wash. In between, the washing up water from the kitchen was used to wash our feet each night and other than that, you washed your hands and face regularly. If you really needed to get clean all over, you went for a swim and that didn't happen very often. School wasn't one of my favourite things to do. They had a little weir for the Queensland British Food Corporation nearby, it provided water for growing crops for the army during the war and I was on the way to school on my horse one

day and just near this weir, I met up with a girl who also rode a horse. There was a little bit of a light shower of rain and I suppose I was showing off, but I said, 'That's enough for me, I'm going home'. So up I went to a trough at the top of a hill near the weir, got off, splashed myself all over and then splashed the horse and went home. When I got there, my sister came out and said, 'What's wrong?' 'Well I got caught in a storm down near the weir and I'm all wet,' I said. She called her husband Bert who looked me over and said, 'How come the horse is only wet on one side? Come on, you've got plenty of time, change your clothes and go back!' I left school altogether when I was around 13.

Bert had felled a bit of scrub at the back and he threw in some watermelon and pumpkin seed and they took over. From his crop he got this huge watermelon that he was really proud of. He had some scales, the type that hang from the rafters so he put the melon in a sugar bag to weigh it and the whole lot fell off and the melon was completely smashed. No one even got a little piece of it – it was a disaster for Bert.

One other recollection of that time is very clear in my mind. I was about 13 and at the farm when my dad and some cousins came down by car to visit and for some reason, he had packets of cigarettes in the car, which the cousins pinched and we sat in the scrub and smoked one after the other until I was sick as a dog and I have never wanted to smoke since.

Many years later when my daughter Kay was school age, she loved going out to Bajool to Dorrie and Bert's place in school holidays. She'd go out by train and Dorrie would come in the sulky to collect her. They did have a car by then, but it never came out of the shed – possibly because fuel was too expensive. Even in those days, bath time was in the tin tub that the washing was done in. Kay remembers those holidays fondly.

Conaghan's at flood time



The house was a two story house with only an external staircase and underneath was just a big room through which the chooks roamed, but upstairs was a different thing, beautiful pictures on the wall and nicely done with a pianola in it. People would walk up through the paddocks from up to a mile away with the old hurricane lamps and come and play the pianola there until morning, having a great old time.

When the family was living at Mt Larcom, my dad would go to all the pig sales and it was through this that Conaghan Brothers offered him the job as caretaker of their Rockhampton piggery. Conaghan's were big meat processors in Rockhampton. They were in East Street, just as you come off Stanley Street. Walter Reid's were next door. The buildings are now completely gone. It ceased operation sometime in the 60s. So Dad became caretaker of the piggery

They had around 100 brood sows and in those days, pigs weren't penned, they just roamed in the paddocks and one of Dad's jobs was to cart the buttermilk from the factory to feed them. Conaghans went through about 70 fat cattle a week, which they then sold as beef around their various retail outlets and they made their own sausages and other small goods and they also did sheep, not lambs, there were very few of them around in those days.

When I was around 15, I got my first job as the boy who swept the floors and ran errands for W O Harris; it was a drapery and clothing place in East Street opposite where the Commonwealth Bank is now. I was getting 10/4d a week which wasn't much, in fact when I got my first pay packet, I wondered if they were keeping some back in case I did a bunk!

Not long after, I went to work for Conaghan's with my father. There, I had to work seven days a week, but I didn't care because the money was pretty good at £1 a week. Amongst other things, I helped Dad with the pigs and looked after the supply of ice. It was before full refrigeration and the ice was made in moulds on the premises and came out as huge blocks. I probably shouldn't have been operating it, but I worked this open circular saw cutting the blocks down to smaller sizes to fit into the ice chests. Doing this, I managed to slice off a couple of joints from a finger and down the side of my thumb. That thumb has never worked properly since. They paid me £128 compensation for that. Today it would probably be thousands.

Some 50 years later, through a scratch on my ankle from the wire in a crab pot, I developed septicemia and was in intensive care for 42 days and things were pretty touchy for a while. I guess I have that early experience with cigarettes to thank for the fact I'm still here because the doctors said I only survived because I'd never smoked. The upshot of the whole thing was that I lost all the toes on both feet and a couple of fingers on my other hand because my blood supply was restricted.

At Conaghan's I worked my way through a number of areas. In wintertime it got a bit quiet in the ice section so I went from my regular jobs and had a week or two in

the slaughter yard and a week or two in the area where they broke up the beef and then I went into the ham and bacon part and learned how to cook the hams in big old wooden casks with a steam pipe in to them.

Conaghan's had wonderful small goods and there would be hooks and hooks of sausages hanging. When the foreman wasn't around, those big old wooden casks would occasionally have a hook full of sausages dropped in amongst the cooking hams and out would come a feed of sausages, ready to go. Times were tough in those days and it was an era where the worker always tried to outsmart the boss and while I don't believe the man in the street was basically dishonest, anything was pretty much 'fair game'.

There were some funny instances I recall while there. There was a fella called Clarrie Cooper. He had a pretty good job. He'd go out and deliver the meat to nearly every pub in town and he was given something like £5 a week to have a drink for good relations along the way. Anyway, one day, he must have been finished and had nothing to do so he washed his hands, put his apron on, sharpened his knife and went down to a shop full of people and said 'Yes madam, what would you like?' and madam said 'No thanks, I'm waiting for Bill'. Bill had a great personality and wherever he went people used to follow him. Anyway Clarrie went along the whole crowd of people and one by one they all said 'Sorry, I'm waiting for Bill'. Clarrie was so put out he turned and said 'Well you can all get stuffed' and then he walked out!

At show time the whole family would be involved in decorating and maintaining the Conaghan's exhibit. As well as the hams and smallgoods, the display, which covered a very large area, included trays and trays of cuts of meat all beautifully laid out. There was no refrigeration, so each day, all of these meat trays had to be emptied and re-stocked for the new day. All the displays at the shows of that era were lovely and ours was no exception. Conaghan's hams were called Wattle Hams and the family would spend hours dying cotton balls yellow and then rolling them into little balls to make elaborate wattle decorations. One time, one of the people filing past said to her friend 'Oh I didn't know wattle was in at this time of year' that's how good it looked.

I went on to become the ham and bacon curer, curing about 100 pigs a week. I was getting about £18 a week then and the butchers were on about £17 a week. I made the brine up myself and I had two men and a lad working in this big room as big as a ballroom. It was cold all the time we were pumping and we wore clogs because of that. The meat was pumped with a combination of saltpetre, sugar, sodium nitrite, sodium benzoate which was a preservative, and some glycerine. The holding vats had just water and salt. The actual process after the pig was killed and sectioned, was to pump them via a hand pump with a special Conaghan's recipe.

Then they went into the brine in big concrete vats about six feet long and waist high, where they'd sit for five or six days. The vats had to be cleared out every two

months and a fresh mixture put in. A Salometer tested the mixture; too strong you added water or too weak, you added salt. When they came out of the vats, they'd be stacked on the floor and salted and left there for a couple of weeks. They don't do that today. After the salting, they'd be scrubbed of excess salt, dried, hung and wood smoked. The whole process took around four weeks from go to whoa.

After that you could hang the ham anywhere and it wouldn't lose a lot of weight. Now when they cure a ham, they go straight into the cooker where our hams used to hang out. Now and then a fly would come along and blow it and you'd lose a whole ham. That isn't a problem today.

When Conaghan's got a deep freeze, we'd start stocking hams away around September. They had to be chilled and frozen first before they could be block stacked in the deep freeze because the freezer wouldn't get right into the middle of the stack. Before I became the bacon curer, the Yanks were here and they bought all these chickens and ducks and turkeys for their Thanksgiving day I suppose it was. They were all freshly dressed and then they were just chilled before stacking them in the deep freeze. It was a big mistake because they were all just piled in there and not properly frozen through and they all went bad except for the ones on the outside. They got insurance for them and I didn't do too badly either, the stuff on the outside, which wasn't too bad, went home.

I met my wife Mavis through the local dances. Old-time dances were the thing then and we had a really good time. Mavis used to sing with the band a bit at one in Depot Hill. My mother had her eye on Mavis and told me, 'that Mavis Lawson is a nice little girl.' Mavis worked at Rickarts in East Street. It had a café in the back and a cake shop in the front and was where Bunt's Menswear shop is now. We were married in 1942 and had three children, Ros, Kay and Graham (called Joe).

Just before Conaghan's closed down, I must have been a bit game but I went to the Commonwealth Bank and borrowed £1000 and another £1000 from my sister and I sold all my fishing gear and we scraped together every penny we had and bought a little butcher shop in Archer Street. I'd never served an official apprenticeship and I'd never served a customer with even a pound of steak but I knew what I wanted. I'm pretty proud of the fact that in the first five and a half day week, we took £125 and the next, around £170. The bloke we bought it from had lost interest and reportedly closed up around 10 am each day and took off. We cleaned it up with the help of the family and I was straight into it. If a car pulled up out the front, I was out the door saying, 'Yes please.' Nobody had to wait if I could help it and people started coming from all around. Of necessity, Mavis became pretty good with the knife and pitched in cutting up the liver and other simple things especially during the butchers' strikes. All the family helped to build the business and pitched in when necessary.

A neighbouring butcher came over and said, 'Have you bought this bloody place?' and I said, 'Yes I have' and he said, 'You'll do no good - nobody's done any good here.'



Our new shop



Herbie Turner on his 'courting machine'

'Well,' I said, 'I borrowed 1000 quid from the bank, I've sold all my fishing gear and everything else and I don't have anything left, so I'd better make it work!'

At the risk of peeing in my own pocket, I think I was a natural salesman. If kids came in they always looked for me because I'd always give them a couple of savs or I'd cut them a bit of Belgium sausage. They'd hang back and wait for me to spot them. I'd cook hams and if people were on their way to work in the morning, they'd drop in and order a piece of corned meat and by the time they finished work in the afternoon, I'd have it cooked and ready for them to pick up. I did this with pig's trotters and anything else that could

be boiled with the hams. That got a lot of people in. It just came naturally.

We had the old big wooden block and sawdust on the floor. Originally there was only a tiny coldroom about 10 ft x 8 ft I wanted to start doing hams and bacon, it was my trade after all and I had the recipe and everything so I got a stainless steel little vat made to sit along the side of the wall and I could fit two cut pigs in it. I invented some planks up high in the coldroom and I would climb up a ladder and put the meat up there to salt and after a couple of weeks, bring them down and hang them in front of the fan and dry them and then wood smoke them. All hams were wood smoked in those days.

Before long Walter Reid built another cold room for me. I knew what I wanted, the freezer at the back and the front part had little doorways with shelves which allowed the trays from the display cabinet to just slot in there at night. This cut down on handling. McKenna's, an opposition butcher shop in East Street gave me this old steel smoke house. It was about 7 ft high and about an arm span wide and it had a door on it that was so skinny you had to go in sideways to hang the hams. You'd light the fire underneath a little pile of sawdust with a rag with a bit of metho on it and it would just smoke all night. I don't know how it never got pinched because it just sat outside. Then I bought a bigger cold room from one of the Chinese fruiterers who had used it for a banana room. We put the concrete floor down then the coldroom was brought up on a winch and the roof was built over it. Then we added an extension on the side and a coldroom round the back. This was all just for hams and bacon.

The farmer would supply the pig and they'd take it to the meatworks and have it killed because legally you weren't allowed to do them at home, but I confess that I did deviate a bit on occasion. The killing charge was a debit against us as was the delivery charge and I think in those days we charged about 10 pence a pound to cure it. Nobody seemed to want the heads, so I used to pump them and cook them and on a Friday I'd put about 12 heads out on the table and inside an hour they'd all go. It was beautiful to eat. I did trotters too – every Friday they'd go out for five pence each – the men loved to eat them with their beers.

Some weeks I was doing 60 pigs for farmers especially coming on Christmas. No-one else pumped a ham or cured bacon except me and I always made all the brine up because I was responsible for my own reputation. We eventually added another internal smoke room. I made my own smallgoods as well, I'd make a batch of Belgium and then give people a taste as they came in. Of course I made my own sausages – they were real sausages then.

In those days butchers weren't legally allowed to handle anything other than meat but I had a mate who used to go to Thompson's Point and get prawns and he'd bring them in the back on a Friday and he'd want salt. We'd weigh them up and I'd often have a couple of pounds of

prawns for home. Word got around and it got that way that I'd often have more orders for prawns out the back door, than meat out the front door.

I had a good friend from fishing who said one day 'I've got a fair few watermelons out there, do you think you could do anything with them?' I said 'Bring them in Friday afternoon, the inspector finishes at dinnertime.' On Saturday morning I had them all out in front of the counter. One bloke's wife wouldn't believe him when he told her he'd bought his watermelon at the butchers!

One day I'm weighing up these prawns out the back and my apprentice Peter came in and said, 'The inspector is here!' I had the smoke house going behind me and I just picked up the tray and chucked the whole lot in.

The inspectors visits weren't welcomed, but in reality they made things better for you by keeping you on the right track. We always had a Christmas party with ham sandwiches and pigs trotters and all the beer they wanted and the inspectors and everybody got invited.

Another thing of interest. We kept a book where people put things on tick, just like everybody else. If a good customer passed away, I'd always send half a cooked ham over – not flowers like everyone else – with a card saying 'To help you in your time of need' and, while it was a genuine gesture, it paid off because rarely were we left with debt, the family would come and settle up. I looked at it as part of my service to my customers. Whenever I meet old customers around town even now, they seem to go out of their way to be friendly and that's worth more than all the money in the world.

We only had one really difficult customer I can recall and a bit like old Clarrie Cooper from Conaghan's, I got to the point where I'd had enough. I'd shout a beer for the men in the afternoon and this customer Mrs X used to go to bowls at the Rocky Club and she'd always come in after everyone was finished and she'd always want a bit of brisket or a bit of liver and when you brought it out it was never any good. It got to the point where all the staff would disappear when they saw her coming. One day, I brought this bit of brisket out and she said 'Oh I don't like the look of that'. I said 'Mrs X, we don't seem to be able to please you.' She said 'What do you mean?' I said 'Well as soon as you walk in the door everyone disappears and no one will serve you. Whatever we bring out you'll never take and you only come here when your own butcher is closed.' She said, 'Are you telling me you don't want me to come here any more?' I said 'I'd be very pleased if you would take your business elsewhere' and she stomped out and I never saw her again.

Over the 15 years I stayed in the shop until my retirement, we had a number of staff. When I went there I had a boy who used to do deliveries for the previous butcher riding a push bike. His name was Peter Diamond. I apprenticed him and he learned how to do hams and bacon and everything. He went on to own his own butcher shop in Dempsey Street where he earned a good reputation. Charlie Doblo worked for me before he went into his own shop. Keith Stock and

Jamie Dwyer were my other apprentices over the years. We were doing big business for those days taking around \$4000 a week and that was every week. At Christmas it was much bigger. The last Christmas I was there, I cooked 1000 hams over six days and nights. Everyone wanted my hams because they were properly cooked in the old fashioned smoked method.

We did all right out of the shop financially, thanks to some sound advice from a fellow by the name of Glen Cousins who was mixed up with finance. When I wanted to add my large coldroom, it was going to cost me around £5600. He gave me advice about the advantages of leasing and suggested I invest first in a set of flats in George Street and then in a property next door. It was before George Street was a highway. We paid about £42 000 for the property and then along came someone who wanted it for a motel and they paid us £150 000 in the hand. We gave some to the kids and then invested the rest. They were the days when you were getting about 17% interest.

All this was a far cry from those early days when we had nothing. When we were first married in 1948, we lived in Mavis's family home down the end of Bolsover Street. Eventually, thanks again to the bank, we started to build a home in Earl Street. There was a disused toilet building at the back of a pub down there and the publican said 'Herb can you use this old toilet of mine?' I said, 'My oath I can' so I knocked it apart and bit-by-bit, took it home on my push bike. I'd strap three of these seven foot planks either side of my push bike and walk them over to Earl Street where I cleaned them up and painted them and made our own 'outhouse'. We have a picture of that house after the 1949 cyclone went through. The house was just ready for the roof to go on and everything but the toilet that Herbie built came down. When the house was eventually built, that toilet caused a night cart man some agony one night. We had a clothesline stretched

from the front of it and he was coming out with the pan hoisted on his shoulder. He didn't duck and the pan hit the line with pretty disastrous results.

In the early days, we didn't have a lot of chairs and we'd sit on a plank across two kerosene tins. We did however have an old honky tonk piano and we had more visitors in those days than any other. They'd come for sing-songs and stay 'til three or four in the morning. I had to put on the pyjamas and come out rattling the milk bottles to get rid of them. We had a Rayburn wood fire stove and every month we'd take the seat out of the back of the car and head off and we cleared the railway line of all the big lumps of coal that came off the trains from Pt Curtis pretty well all the way down to Bajool. Also, we found an old post and rail fence and every Friday night we'd go down and get a bit more and cut it up with the cross saw to feed the stove. It wasn't an easy life by today's standards, but we had lots of fun. That era is gone now.

Along the way, through hard work, our situation improved and we lived in a few homes after Earl Street. Once the shop was running well with good staff, I even managed to get back out fishing a bit and I joined the Athelstane Bowling Club. I look at the newer processes the butchers use now to cure their hams. They have automated ovens with temperature controls and automatic smoke systems. They can do multiple batches a day, which allow them to buy the pig one Monday and be selling it cured, the next. When I tell these young blokes about selling 1000 hams in a week with my process, they find it hard to believe.

Mavis and I celebrated our 60th wedding anniversary last year and we received letters from the Queen, John Howard, Peter Hollingsworth, Peter Beattie, Margaret Strelow, Kirsten Livermore and Simon Crean and many of our friends and family. Something like that can't help but make you sit back and consider that we've done all right and that we've had a pretty good life.



The house after the 1949 cyclone with Herbie's loo still standing

A Gentler Time

Edited from material supplied by Trevor Acutt

The following is a report in the Morning Bulletin dated 25 July 1931, of the wedding of Trevor's aunt - his mother's sister. It filled almost a column in the paper and paints the picture of a gentler time, a time when people took a genuine interest in each other and a time when families could honestly state that the 70 guests were either family or 'intimate friends'. It was obviously also a time when the 'wardrobe' of the women involved came under much scrutiny and, it's interesting to note that even as far back as 1931, gerberas were in vogue.

Wedding Lehfeldt - Broomfield

A wedding of more than usual interest was solemnised on Saturday afternoon last, the contracting parties being William Alexander, eldest son of Mr and Mrs W Lehfeldt, Quarnlea, Kalapa, and Gladys Violet, eldest daughter of Mr and Mrs H F Broomfield, The Cedars, Kalapa.

The Rev C E Luton, of the Baptist Tabernacle, Rockhampton, performed the ceremony at the residence of the bride's parents, also presiding at their wedding breakfast, which was held on the spacious verandah. The decorations were on a most lavish scale, being carried out in green, orange and lemon, with a huge bell suspended over the happy couple. The decorations were the work of the young lady friends of the bride. A beautifully decorated three-tiered wedding cake adorned the table in front of the bridal couple. About 70 relatives and intimate friends were present.

The marriage ceremony took place in the living room, which was designed to represent a church, being an arch with palms and flowers, from which a wedding bell was suspended.

Miss Scott (Rockhampton) played 'Here Comes the Bride' as the bride entered on the arm of her father. Those present then sang 'The Voice that Breathed O'er Eden'.

Miss Scott played the Wedding March at the conclusion of the ceremony. Mr H Hill (Rockhampton) uncle of the bridegroom, sang 'Love's Old Sweet Song' during the signing of the register.

The bride wore a beautiful frock of ivory crepe remain cut on long lines. The bodice was relieved with shirring and the skirt ankle length, fully flared, with two dainty flares on hips and finished with diamante buckle. She carried a beautiful bouquet of

Lady Dunleath roses. Her beautiful embroidered veil, which was worn Madonna fashion, was lent by the bridegroom's sister, Mrs G Connell, Rockhampton. Miss Maisie Broomfield, sister of the bride, attended as bridesmaid, and chose a dainty frock of printed cactus green santoy, cut on long lines, with angle-length skirt, fully flared bodice slightly shirred and finished with bows of contrasting shades of green with dainty flare on hips. Green shadow straw hat and green satin shoes completed the costume. She carried a bouquet of gerberas and roses. Mr R Lehfeldt, brother of the bridegroom, was best man. The bride's mother wore black relieved with beige, with bottle green hat. She carried a posy of red roses. The bridegroom's mother chose a black morocain frock relieved with mastic and a black hat. She also carried a posy of pink roses.

After the breakfast the happy couple motored to Yeppoon, where the honeymoon is being spent. The bride's travelling frock was of navy marocain bodice finished with bolero effect and trimming of printed crepe de chine skirt with set in flares, daintily tucked. She wore a smart navy hat.

They were the recipients of very many handsome and valuable presents, including several cheques.



L to R : My mother Maisie Acutt, William Alexander (Alec) Lehfeldt, Gladys Violet Broomfield, Mr R Lehfeldt.

A Nightingale Returns

By Dorothy Smith

This is the story of a young Lancashire lass, my great grandmother, who shortly after arriving in Queensland with her husband and baby son, had of necessity, to make a rather dramatic change to her chosen career. Miss Emily Walker, (daughter of Thomas, an Inspector of Schools, and his wife Elizabeth) completed her training as a nurse at the Florence Nightingale Hospital in Manchester. After her marriage to schoolteacher Robert Taylor and the birth of their son, this couple made the momentous decision to emigrate to Queensland. We do not know what prompted this young family to leave England's shores, but Robert, Emily and their baby son boarded the ship *Countess Russell* on 26 February 1873 bound for Rockhampton arriving at Keppel Bay on 29 June 1873.

A diary kept by John Carkeet (passenger No. 696) stated there were 25 deaths and six births during the 158 days of the voyage. The ship was in fact, kept in quarantine in Keppel Bay for some 26 days due to illness, probably typhoid fever. Emily was such an efficient nursing sister, that under the matron Mrs Ware, she was given charge of nursing on board when fever broke out during the voyage. The passengers finally reached Rockhampton on 26 July 1873.

They were not to know that the 366 immigrants to land in Rockhampton were to be from the last voyage of the sailing ship *Countess Russell*. On 21 August 1873 after disembarkation, the ship was proceeding in ballast to Newcastle NSW when she was driven ashore near midnight upon Wreck Reef by a south-easterly gale. No lives were lost but she broke up and her remains lay

undiscovered for almost a century until, on 19 December 1971 following a cyclone, the anchor from the *Countess Russell* was left exposed about 10 miles south of Round Hill, approximately forty miles south of Gladstone.

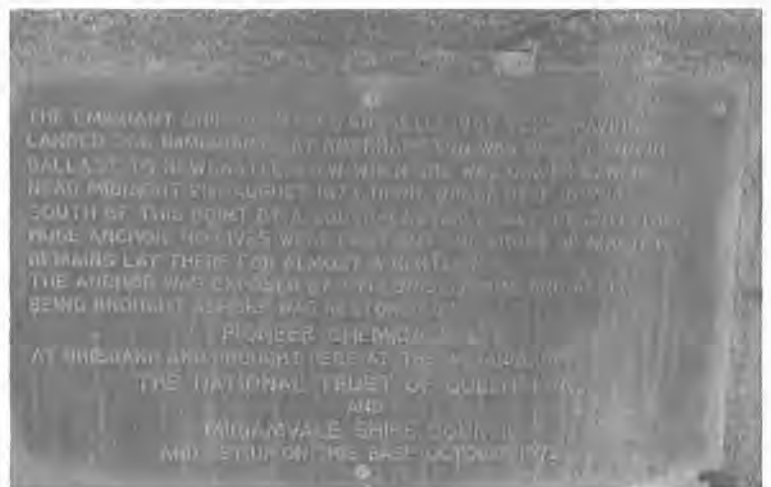
Some four months after landing in Rockhampton, the family had somehow made their way to Stanwell. The following information, extracted from the 'Centenary Book, Stanwell School, 1876 – 1976' tells us :

'Robert Taylor was appointed as teacher at the Stanwell School. The Committee stated Mr Taylor would commence duties on 3 November 1873. The Inspector for the Board reported Mr Taylor was appointed on 2 November, while the Board gave a date of 7 November 1873. By the end of the following year, Mr Taylor was reported as suffering from jaundice and died on 21 December 1874 leaving a 23 year old widow to support a small family. Several days after the unfortunate death of Robert Taylor many of the parents signed a petition requesting his widow, Emily, be employed in his place.'

This then was the beginning of a new career for Emily. As was normal practice at that time, Emily had been her husband's assistant at the school helping out with the 24 children, but she had done none of the 'teaching' so the situation was not an easy one for her. Two years later official records state that the provisional school was definitely closed on 6 July 1876 so her services were no longer required.

Even though her new career was begun of necessity, it did not stop there because just one month later according to the Queensland State Archives, she appears again in official records as the newly appointed provisional teacher of a school at Rosewood Crossing and again, four years later, as a provisional teacher at Dingo.

Emily had remarried in June 1876. Her second husband, William John Milliken was also a member of the teaching profession, being employed as a provisional teacher at Boolburra, from 26 September 1875 to 12 May 1876. A daughter was born to William and Emily in 1877. There is no record as to what happened



to the family until Emily is recorded as being the teacher at Dingo School in the years 1880 – 1881.

Sometime in 1882, Emily became Mrs George Neil. George was the son of Thomas and Mary Ann Neil, formerly of Goudhurst, Kent, who emigrated to New South Wales in 1843 on board the ship *Berkshire*. The Neil family lived and worked on the property 'Brownlow Hill' in the Camden/Picton area where George was born; before coming to 'Saunders' or 'Sanders', Dingo, in the 1860s. Two children were born to George and Emily, a daughter in 1884 and a son in 1886. All four of Emily's children were enrolled at Dingo School, the two eldest in 1884 and the last two in 1891. By this time, Emily had decided that her teaching days were over.

It was to be in Dingo that the 'Nightingale' returned. The following extract is taken from 'The Dingo State School Centenary Book, 1876-1976':

'Mr & Mrs George Neil came to the district sometime in the 1880s. Their first home was at the blacksmith shop where there were some living rooms, until they made their own home at 'The Swamp' where they attended a market garden. Mr Neil would assist as camp cook at 'Charlevue' at mustering time. Mrs Neil was the local midwife. She brought into the world most of the children born at Dingo in the 1880s and 90s. Distance did not deter her for on one occasion she travelled by horse and buggy to 'Fairfield Station' a distance of about 125 miles, in those days, to attend Mrs Waldron, the wife of the manager there. In the late 90s she went to Rockhampton and conducted a nursing home in one of the Pattison's houses in Denison Street.'

Emily conducted her nursing home under the guidance of Dr Parry. Her nursing home remained well known in Rockhampton for many years, as did her reputation as Nurse Neil.

George Neil died on 9 October 1908 and, as was common practice at that time, his funeral moved from the Residence of Nurse Neil, on 10 October. By 1919 Emily had moved to live with her eldest daughter in Campbell Street. Emily died on 28 February 1923 and is buried with George in the Rockhampton Cemetery.

Note: After the huge anchor from *Countess Russell*, the ship that bore Emily to Australia was left exposed by the 1971 cyclone, it was salvaged and for a time displayed in the yard of the Royal Hotel at Rosedale. The Receiver of Wrecks stepped in and removed it to Bundaberg. Now restored, the National Trust intends returning it to a final resting place in the Trust's 49-acre reserve 'Round Hill', only a few miles from where the ship first foundered. It will be a fitting testament to those passengers who like Emily, bravely faced life in a new world so long ago.



**George Neil (born Brownlow Hill, NSW 29/5/1849; died Rockhampton 9/10/1908) Occupation, grazier
and**

**Emily (Walker, Taylor, Milliken) (born Manchester, Lancashire, England 21/12/1852; died Rockhampton 28/2/1923)
Occupations; nurse, school teacher, midwife
and their daughter**

Georgina Inga (born Dingo, Qld, 9/4/1884, died Rockhampton 31/5/1963)



Gallant Nellie

By Isabel Hoch

This story has been previously published in 1990 by the Longreach Hall of Fame.

When I was growing up on a sheep property in western Queensland, my father bought a four-cylinder Chevrolet truck for £26. It was already old and came minus cabin, windscreen and seat; but soon became part of our family.

We made a seat by stuffing corn bags with raw wool and endowed the truck with gender and a name – Nellie. No other motoring experience has quite equalled the pleasure of hurdling along through the trees at about 15 miles an hour with the wind in my face and two dogs on the seat beside us. As soon as my feet could reach the pedals my father taught me to drive, an accomplishment I mastered despite the distracting dogs and the fact that I was not tall enough to see over the steering wheel. This wheel was taken from a much bigger vehicle because Nellie's own fell to pieces soon after she came to us. I would peer through it, narrowly missing trees and gateposts and sometimes not missing them at all.

Crashes were not taken too seriously because Nellie could not go fast enough for them to do much harm. A blowlamp and a sledgehammer usually fixed things. Sometimes the spokes of her wooden wheels had to be taken apart and repacked. When one of her mudguards fell off and was run over, it was replaced by another off the same vehicle as the steering wheel. It gave her a lop sided appearance but did nothing to detract from our regular journeys to check water and fences.

Even when she developed a habit of jumping out of gear when called on for extra effort we just learned to hold the lever in place by pressing one knee against it.

In time though, Nellie began to suffer from a more serious complaint. A blockage in her innards caused a chronically boiling radiator that no amount of pepper, blue bag or other dosage would cure. Even major surgery was to no avail. We were obliged to drive with drums of water on the back which pleased the dogs who lapped up the spillage.

Then came a scorching December day when we had to take five rams to a new paddock. They were tied down on the back but Nellie put forth such volumes of steam from her radiator that six stops had to be made in as many miles. The heavy rams had to be dragged to lie panting under shady trees while the engine cooled enough for us to fill with water again.

'That's it,' my father pronounced, gasping and swearing in the heat. 'Nellie's had it! She's finished.' Soon a new truck flaunted itself in the shed while Nellie lay on the scrap heap beside the other old vehicle and hens laid eggs on her bag-stuffed-with-wool upholstery.

But she had not made her final journey. That came a year later when the new truck had been lent to a neighbour. Heavy and almost continuous rain set in, as sometimes happens in the outback and even when the roads dried out, a flooded creek prevented the truck's return. But blowflies bred up and began to eat into the wool and flesh of the sheep. It became urgently necessary to spray them with a chemical using an engine that was four miles away. But how to fetch it?

'Would Nellie still go?' I asked hopefully.

She would! An hour's tinkering and pushing produced the old familiar chug-chug-chug-chug of four valiant cylinders and sent two excited dogs scrambling on board. (They had never been allowed inside the cabin of the new truck.)

It was almost sundown when we set off. Our return was a matter for conjecture but Nellie reached the dam where the engine rested under a small shed in less than an hour. We lugged it onto the back and headed for home.

Spluttering and hissing we ploughed along, stopping at rain filled gutters to top up the spitting Vesuvius of her radiator. Then on again, her one operational headlight peering wanly into the darkness, her accelerator pressed to the floorboard and her gear lever forced to stay in

place by a grip of two hands. At last we saw the lights of home and knew that tomorrow we could save the lives of fly struck sheep thanks to Nellie's gallant journey.

And now she surely had earned a peaceful retirement beside her transplant mentor of the mudguard and the steering wheel with the hens for company. But no! Father sold her shortly afterwards to a scrap merchant for £48. She had served us for 14 years and then yielded almost 100% profit. Vale Nellie. Fine old lady of my youth.



Nellie, me – and dogs.

The Phone Fixer of the 1930s

By Reg Fitzpatrick

In 1914, a patriotic 19-year-old Gus Mann went to war 'to protect the Empire'.

He survived three and a half months on Gallipoli in 1915.

He was listed as 'killed in action' in France in 1916, but crawled back wounded after a night huddled in a shell hole with dead mates – and so was relisted as 'wounded in action'.

He was wounded again in late 1916 yet survived the horrors of France to go on to officer training in Britain and later attended a telephone technician's course in 1918.

This prepared him for eventual demobilisation back home.

Gus Mann became a telephone technician with the PMG (Post Master General's Department of the day – which also controlled the Post Office) in 1927.

As he developed his knowledge of the telephone system and recorded many of the 'secrets' in his little personal notebook he became even more valuable. He was called upon to travel widely into country areas some of which were barely accessible. Gus would use his own motorbike and sidecar – with a box tied to the back of the bike and head to far off places. To Gogango down 'the valley' and to Emerald in the west often getting bogged or held up by roads that were merely tracks, or even by flood waters. Camping by the roadside at night was not that unusual – just to keep the phones going.

But the bonus was that Gus was paid extra for this – a halfpenny per mile was the reward as a travel allowance for using his own transport.

This was the war survivor who had been told by his doctor in 1936 that due to those war wounds and experiences such as being gassed in the trenches of France, he should make early provision for the fact that he would not last another 10 years.

Things did improve. Roads became better, telephones actually used power and didn't depend on batteries that would go flat... and Gus Mann kept working keeping the phones going. (He and wife Dorothy brought up a family of five, living in Rockhampton all their married life.)

The PMG became Telecom and later Telstra.

Gus became President of the Rockhampton RSL and marched every Anzac Day till his last few years. He died at age 86 in 1981.

In later years Gus was amazed that no technician stopped to pull phones apart to fix them. He merely replaced them and sent them away to be repaired by girls! (It was rare indeed, those days, for women to be doing technical things.) How he would be surprised to find that these days' phones are not even repaired – merely thrown away.

And what about those cute little mobile phones that our kids and grandkids now use day and night to send text messages to the friends they have just left earlier that day. Wouldn't that be an eye opener for Gus the phone fixer of the 'good old days'.



Bike & Sidecar



Bogged Bike

Anzac Day, 1965



Mercy (Griffin) Dickinson

Edited from material supplied by Helene Jones OAM

This story began with the receipt of a letter, some newspaper articles and a book titled 'As I've Seen It' by Mercy Dickinson, from Helene Jones. Her letter, reproduced here, tempted me into the enclosed material and Mercy's story.

Extracts from the book have been re-produced with the kind permission of Debut Publishing.

I first saw Mercy Griffin at Norma Park Eisteddfod in Brisbane in the 1930s. I was young and played the piano but Mercy sang songs, said recitation and won the prize for Braille reading. Because I was young, I knew nothing about Braille or blindness but, even then, I could recognise her talent and the wonderful spirit. Over the years, we met often. Mercy loved music and attended all the concerts. The man she eventually married, Harold Dickinson, was a singer and violinist. He too was blind. Sometimes, I played his accompaniment. The very thought of Mercy still warms my heart. I would feel very sad if she were not to be recognised or was forgotten by the Rockhampton people whom she always loved.

Signed Helene Jones.

Mercy's blindness when seven as a result of meningitis, changed her life and that of her family, forever. Despite this dramatic upheaval to one so young, throughout her own story as told in her book *As I've Seen It*, her unending optimism and happiness with her life has a major impact. In telling of her 'first seven years' she says 'Happy is the childhood that knows no drama. Those were blissfully uneventful years for me. I was the second child of a loving, caring family and though luxuries were few, Mum managed to stretch Dad's wages to accommodate our needs and a few dearly prized extras.' 'Your mother will manage', Dad cheerfully said.' She talks about the pleasure she and her mother derived from the roses in the garden, the Italian Opera Company that toured the state in the early twenties, and the musical comedies that the J C Williamson companies brought to Rockhampton.

252 Alma Street where the family lived, the parish church in the next block and the convent school next door were the centre of her family's life. Music through singalongs at the piano, listening to gramophone recordings and hearing a violin at a young age, impressed themselves on her and St Patrick's Day was the highlight of the social calendar. She was enrolled in First Babies at St Patrick's with the religious sisters, the Sisters of Mercy and she loved school. It was in November 1926 not long after her seventh birthday, life changed.

She had been unwell with bouts of nausea that would pass and then, 'One day sitting on the back verandah while Mum scrubbed the floor, I was puzzled by the shadow over one end of the verandah. At that time of morning it should have been bright with sunlight. I asked Mum if the day was suddenly cloudy' An astute mother got her to hospital quickly where tests were done. 'Nobody said the word 'meningitis' but gradually I realised this was the name for the cause of my blindness', she said. 'At first my reaction was a healthy resentment that no one would tell me what was going to happen.' She was in hospital for seven weeks and as well as the removal of her appendix there were several minor operations when fluid was tapped from her spine. She was by then totally blind, but when allowed to get up after the regulation long period of bed rest, she was more intent on learning to walk again, than trying to see.

Once home, soft pads were put over her eyes, small plasters were put on her temples and to the skin at the back of her ears and on the nape of her neck. These drew painful blisters. Then, one afternoon in May, some six months after her sight failed, when she walked into the kitchen, she was aware of the brightness of sunlight. That was to be the extent of her sight for the remainder of her life.



L. to R. Brother Jim, sister Nell, brother Gerald and Mercy with Mum seated.

Mercy's husband, Harold and Harold's brother Eddie were also blind. They lost not only their sight but also their eyes because of a malignancy, retinoblastoma. She tells how when Harold was four and living in Toowoomba, the local doctor removed one of his eyes on the family kitchen table. She says however, 'Harold and I considered ourselves fortunate as we were both born into loving families whose care and affection helped us to accept the challenges and the reality of blindness. For my family there was also faith in a loving God'.

After leaving hospital she says with amazing calmness, that life was smooth and relatively uneventful although her unsatisfied desire was to go to school. With support from her family and the parish priest, she was able to continue with her preparation for First Communion, which was for her, 'A golden day.' Within a few weeks, however, life changed again.

Her mother explained that she was to go to Brisbane where it seemed that blind children learned to read with their fingers! 'That afternoon I patiently pricked out with a pin the letters of the alphabet on a sheet of newspaper. I think I was hoping that this dispensed with the going away part and that I could stay home with my family'.

Under the 1924 Blind, Deaf and Dumb Children's Instruction Act, Mercy was compelled to attend the School for the Deaf and Blind in Brisbane, over 600 km from home. Her parents were expected to pay her board. The distance mattered little because even parents who lived closer were discouraged from visiting. School, austere as it was, soon absorbed the young Mercy and the inherent intellectual curiosity that was so much a part of her, emerged.

In her book, Mercy talks of the challenges and the joys that she experienced at the school and of the capable and inspiring teachers and fellow students who set her on her new path. She says 'School, though different from St Pat's was good and happy. Food however, was awful. 'Tea in the dining room was unappetising; slices of bread spread with syrup or honey hours beforehand, tea which was to be drunk from enamel or tin mugs whose handles could be grasped only with the aid of the all-purpose handkerchief. I think at this time we were allocated two hankies a week. The sight of that poor, overworked handkerchief would have horrified the fastidious and certainly shocked our mother.'

Her mother, after going with her to Brisbane, had returned to Rockhampton after a fortnight. When she left 'I found my way back to my bed, knelt down to say my prayers, and crept between the sheets. Now I was alone. With the blankets over my head I could cry the tears I had been trying to hold back since Mum had left me. She, for her part, was probably shedding a few lonely tears too.'

Her mother learnt to read uncontracted Braille and they began weekly letters which although stilted, were to sustain Mercy over the years. She makes comment that the recorder, the telephone and now the personal computer have made dramatic changes for the group now called 'Print Handicapped.' One of the highlights of the school curriculum included individual lessons in music and long before she started music lessons, she would listen spellbound to other children's lessons. Mercy chose to learn the violin for which she had to provide her own strings. Although they cost much less than now they were still usually beyond the family budget and then, they were designed for a much shorter life span. 'Oh the drama of having a broken string, usually minutes before the opening of a school concert' she laments.

At around age 12, Mercy was entered in a literary section at an eisteddfod and received a good report and through that, it was decided that she should sit for the State Scholarship papers in English and mathematics.

It was this serendipitous nomination that set her on an outstanding academic career and Mercy warmly

attributes the help of her scholarship teacher and later teachers at the Brisbane State High School who acquired braille skills, as being the people largely responsible for her success.

Mercy tells of that first examination. 'The State Scholarship Examination was held in the first week of the Christmas holidays and that meant that I had to remain after the other children left'. A staff member was allowed to read the questions to her and 'I brailled the answers and as I completed each page, she transcribed it for the benefit of the examiners.' Her mother had come to Brisbane to take Mercy home for the holidays so, like other children, she had to wait for her results to be published in the Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin* and one morning, the following January her father woke her excitedly to tell her she'd passed.

Mercy never lost her connection to 'home' and she and her mother were at Mass in St Patrick's in August 1945, in the little old church that had been so much a part of her childhood, when peace was declared. Her father had passed away not long before her 21st birthday. On arriving home, their neighbours invited them to go with them to East Street, to join in the general celebration. 'I went with the Martins and have vivid memories of the wild celebrations of the crowd as they danced the Hokey-Pokey, and of a band playing *My Dreams are Getting Better all the Time*'.

Mercy was to make frequent trips home, to celebrate family events or to spend time with family, old friends and neighbours, before overseas trips. Her sister Nell to whom her book is dedicated was very close to her and her brothers Jim and Gerald and their families, gave her great support and brought her much joy.

'The holidays were golden days.' She says, 'Nell would have books to read to me. Sometimes Mum managed a few excursions to the pictures. I remember the old Earls Court, an open-air cinema where we sometimes had to dash for shelter from sudden storms, and always had to snuggle into a rug in winters. Nell gallantly filled in the details that I couldn't glean for myself. If I knew the story in advance, I could get some clues from the background music. However as the silent film gave way to the 'talkie' her job became less time consuming. Home also meant food. To me, it seemed of infinite variety and superior quality.'

After passing the Junior Public Examination and winning the Brunton Stephens Essay Prize, Mercy broke down more barriers and matriculated in Arts to the University of Queensland, the first blind student to do so. She graduated in a Bachelor of Arts in 1940, the first totally blind graduate of that university. She became a foundation student of Duchesne College where she gained further support.

Graduation brought with it hopes of employment and, after overcoming more difficulties Mercy Griffin, BA was appointed tutor at the Evening Tutorial Classes attached to the Teachers Training College. The appointment of Mercy, offering English, Latin and French tutorials assisted

and inspired many students. In 1948 she was appointed as a teacher at the School for the Deaf and Blind at Dutton Park and then won a postgraduate scholarship from the New York Institute for Education of the Blind in 1954. She was also awarded a Fulbright Fellowship.

She went on to study in New York, which led to a Master's Degree from the Hunter University and she continued her overseas experience in England working at various schools and training centres for the blind during 1955.

Mercy's first meeting with Harold Dickinson and the impediments between that meeting and marriage described by Mercy as the 'marriage of true minds' is a wonderful story in itself. They made a true team advocating and demonstrating social and economic independence for blind people. The Training and Placement Centre, now a part of TAFE, was the result of their work.

On the death of her beloved husband, Mercy again showed courage and fortitude, items that were never short in her armoury. A few weeks after Harold's death, she received a letter telling her she had been nominated for an AM, Member of the Order of Australia award, and she received it at a ceremony at Government House the following April with sister Nell and another friend by her side. In 1986, she treasured the honour of being asked to read the first Lesson of the Mass celebrated by Pope John Paul II at QEII Stadium during his visit.

Mercy was a leader in the blind community for most of her adult life and was actively engaged with national and state organisations in that role, particularly involving braille. In an interview in the ABC Weekly in 1955 after returning from one of her overseas trips, she spoke passionately about opportunities for blind people to be absorbed into the 'normal' workforce saying that in England, the Civil Service alone employed 350 blind shorthand typists and telephonists and advocated that with training and placement, many things are possible.

She finished that article by saying, 'We, the blind, will always need your help, but we also have things to offer you. In all honesty and in a deep sense of responsibility, we are trying now to convince the sighted world that the blind pioneers will prove themselves worthy of the opportunities opening to them. In this way we can add to the general happiness of the whole community and make the world much happier than we have found it.'

Rockhampton can be proud indeed of one of its own who went on to leave the world much happier and much better than they found it.

Mercy Dickinson passed away in October 2003.

As I've Seen It, ISBN 1 876329 60 2,

author Mercy Dickinson

First published Debut Publishing June 2000.

Reprinted August 2000, Debut Publishing.

Available from 1800 625 399, email
info@debut.com.au.



High School 1944

A very short story by Hilda (Olive) Olive

This delightful story arrived by mail from Mackay accompanied by a letter explaining that it was prompted by hearing grandchildren saying, 'I'm bored'. It was the contemplation of their DVDs, computers, X Boxes, electric organs, a saxophone, sporting commitments, movies, McDonalds, Sizzlers, school dances and sleepovers that led Hilda to her musings of her high school days

The entrance requirement for a free education at high school was a scholarship pass of at least 50 percent. Living in the country presented other problems. Children often attended boarding schools either at Rockhampton, Yeppoon, Townsville or Charters Towers. The other alternative was to board privately in Mackay or travel by the Netherdale train to Mackay on a daily basis.

Three months into the school year 1944 I returned home from boarding school and began boarding with an elderly couple and their grownup daughter in Victoria Street, Mackay. Most boarding school principals had been instructed to advise parents that children should be near home as the war was very close to our shores.

I could walk a half-mile to the siding carrying a small port containing my weekly clothes supply and a knapsack on my back containing my books. The train arrived at approximately 7.45 am. My friend from Finch Hatton would hail me from a carriage. Seats were in rare supply, as the train would be packed with American servicemen and their girls returning from a weekend at the Chalet Eungella.

The train would stop at Newbury Junction where most passengers would purchase scones and tea. The station mistress was renowned throughout the district for her scones. Although I had eaten a hot breakfast I would join the queue. Yes I did qualify for the extra coupon allowance being five foot five in tall and over eight and a half stone in weight.

The train would stop at every siding and station enroute to Paget Junction. There we would usually be held waiting sometimes for several hours to allow troop trains to pass. The train would stop across Sydney Street Mackay and all the 'train kids' would alight. We would often miss the first lesson and sometimes well into the second lesson. I could cope with missing maths, or English, however geometry was another matter. I am still wondering about theorems and the hypotenuse.

At little lunch we would buy a cream bun for a penny at the shop across the street from the school. At midday I would walk about eight blocks to my boarding home and be served a salad lunch. I would then walk back to school.

After arriving home in the afternoon I would usually complete my homework and practice the piano. I was allowed the privilege of using my host's instrument. At night-time we would all sit in the kitchen and knit, I usually went to bed at 8.30 pm. Sometimes on a Wednesday night I would accompany my host's daughter

to a movie. It didn't seem to matter which time of the day or night we ventured along Victoria Street it was lined with American servicemen, they would be sitting on the courthouse and Commonwealth Bank steps. The Grand Hotel was their main base.

Friday afternoons we would leave class at 2.45 pm, although the lesson didn't finish until 3 pm. This meant we would often not receive our homework handout; some teachers took a dim view of 'train kids'. As we entered the station we were always stopped to show our pass. Sometimes this meant the one without would line up outside the fence and someone with a pass would pass theirs across. The old gatekeeper was keen on passes but not so diligent about names.

Finding a seat was not an easy task as the Americans and their girls were on their way to Eungella again. Often we would ride home on the rear balcony of a carriage. Sometimes a few of the older girls would find seats on an American's knee. It had been known for several of these lasses to spend time locked in a toilet with an airman. I could not understand why someone would want to go into a toilet with a male, but then I thought 'Frenchies' were the Americans fighting companions in New Guinea. I would arrive at Bolden siding at about 4.30 pm.

Sunday mornings usually meant hair wash day and Saturday afternoon was baking day. I usually beat sponge mixtures, 5 minutes for the egg and 15 – 20 minutes after the sugar was added. A hand beater too. Despite that training I never became a proficient sponge cake maker.

Sunday afternoons we usually rode our bicycles about a mile through the cane paddocks to the Pioneer River where we swam and picnicked with other families. Sometimes, if the petrol ration allowed, our mother would drive us to the swimming hole in the river at Mirani. Two or three times per year depending on the suitability of the movie, Shirley Temple or Jane Withers, we would be taken to Marian open air theatre. We did see Mrs Miniver. Sometime during the weekend I would iron my clothes ready for the return of the school week.

Monday would see a repeat performance. Strangely enough I don't ever recall hearing the term 'I'm bored.'

Life at Kalapa

By Trevor Acutt

I was born in Rockhampton in 1938 to parents who farmed at Kalapa (Woodend), 40 kilometres west of Rockhampton. My childhood memories of the 1940s are dominated by the Second World War, farm life, schooling and the social life in a small country district.

As fourth generation family members of the area, I look back now and proudly reflect on the efforts and achievements of

the earlier generation of farmers and workers of not just my family, but many other families as well.

Born in Scotland, my grandfather Charles Acutt, was one of six children. A prized family possession is a missive, in the form of a poem, which he wrote to his brother back home, on his journey to Australia and a new life. Neither before, nor after, did he ever write anything like it again. The year was 1888. He titled it:

Charles Acutt's Voyage to the Tropical Region

*I left the town of 'Aberdeen'
While young and gay just out eighteen
Round to see some foreign isle
In the good old ship, The Duke Of Argyle*

*To let you understand, you know
To London first we had to go.
For two days only, and such a pity
And that was all in London city*

*T'was on the 13th day of June.
A pretty summer's afternoon.
In the year of 1888,
When down the Thames we took our gait*

*There were a good few sailors on board,
With passengers and crew all told
Numbering about five hundred odd
And a general cargo made the load*

*The Duke upon the waves did climb
And cleared the English Channel fine
The mist being thick we scarce could see
But we left old England on the lea.*

*The sea then grew a little frisky
As we neared the Bay of Biscay
It shook the poorest of their stomachs
Till they could only lie and vomit*

*After passing through the Bay
And sailing on for almost a day
We sighted some more land again
They told us t'was the coast of Spain.*

*The sea was calm and did not alter
Till we passed the rocks of Gibraltar
It being so dark we lost that sight
We passed at 9 o'clock at night.*

*Before we sighted Malta Isle
A little child grew ill a while
And died upon the following day.
So she was buried by the way.*

*A fortnight passed and now we've made
Fast the anchor in Port Said
The Arabs the coal with force
To feed the hungry iron horse.*

*We steamed away the following day
Up the Canal without delay
With the electric light and all so well
A prettier sight you ne'er befell*

*The weather then it grew so hot,
That on the deck lay all the lot,
With beds here and beds there
Scattered over every where.*

*We lay away without mishap
Until one night the sea did lap
It swept the deck with such a force,
We were only wet and none the worse.*

*Another fortnight passed and gone
And now at last we've reached Ceylon.
And drew up in Columbo harbour
And for the night we dropped the anchor.*

*They would not let us go ashore
For fear of coming back no more
So we could only stand and look
From off the side of the good old Duke*

*The darkies they did bring some fruit
To us hungry new chums on the Duke
So each one set to with a will
Until they had their utmost fill*

*After taking coals on board
The anchor weighed, the whistle roared
We steamed away some hundred miles
The nearest port being Thursday Isles*

*The islands here they are so pretty
I can't describe them in this ditty.
Perhaps you will excuse on sure
For I am but an amateur.*

*Up the anchor then we got
And once again we are afloat
In a day or two we soon did spy
The mainland with our naked eye.*

*Along the coast we had to call
At seven different ports in all
Before we reached our destination
Then put ashore at the Quarantine Station.*

*Eight weeks now have passed and gone.
Since the day I left my native home
It seemed so short some all the way
For we had good music every day*

*We stood upon one little Isle
And bade farewell to the Duke of Argyle
With three loud cheers for Captain Prentice
For safely over he did bring us.*

*But great praise to Him above
Who rules us with His wondrous love
If we on Him will but rely
He shall land us safely home on High.*

*Now brother Tom my rhyme is ended
And unto you I think I'll send it
Trusting that you will complete
And send me one as trim and neat.*



Charles landed in Brisbane and married in Ipswich, arriving in Kalapa in the 1890s. Arriving on his own from Scotland in his early twenties, marrying, raising a family and making a living off a small farm with no financial support from family at home, indicated courage to be admired.

He was one of the first to store silage in pits as a resource for drought times – this was something he had learnt in Scotland where hay etc. was stored in barns for use during winter

The rail line to Westwood from Rockhampton opened in 1867 and was the lifeline for a lot of the settlers west of Rockhampton. Because the roads were of a very poor standard, this rail line was used by the early settlers mainly men, to attend to business in Rockhampton. For many years these trains were called 'ten up and forty-nine down'. In early years, these trains carried not only passengers, but also livestock and produce and household items such as meat from the butcher wrapped in newspaper and sent to each customer in a hessian bag.



*Standing left.: Charles Acutt with two of his nine children.
My father Roy and Ivy.*



The Acutt family home. Charles driving wife Alice. Daughter Alice on horse

The home that Ray Broomfield built which then became my family home. Second left is my grandmother and grandfather Ray is at the front wearing his pith helmet.



At Kalapa, those waiting for the train, which was not always on schedule, waited at the 'Tree of Knowledge' (a very large brigalow tree). To fill in time a lot of tall tales were told, often about large snakes in the district. I was there once when one of the tall snake stories was told, it impressed me at the time – it was about some of the men getting a heck of a fright, when what they thought was a log they'd sat on, moved.

Because some prosperity eluded a lot of the earlier settlers due to several factors including drought, war, floods, pests such as grasshoppers, prickly pear etc., a bond grew between most residents and local gatherings were always well attended. My relatives and other earlier settlers were used to the fertile green hills of England, Scotland, Wales and Germany and must have found the Central Queensland climate harsh in comparison.

My maternal grandfather Ray Broomfield built our

home, which is still being used. It had a hilltop view of Black Mountain, the Native Cat Ranges and Mount Candlelight. This range created a natural northern boundary of our district. Running out of the range was Gold Gully, in which my Uncle Alec Lehfeldt found some respectable pieces of gold. As youngsters, these ranges were a source of enjoyment, exploring the caves therein, always thinking that an Aboriginal warrior would step forth as we disturbed his cave.

Prior to her marriage, my mother and her sisters spent a lot of their time with other pioneers of the district, namely my great grandparents the Broomfield and Williams families. Mum spoke highly of a jolly grandfather Hector Williams and his whiskers, and a wonderful cook – her grandmother Mary Williams. The Williams had arrived in Australia in 1876. Both families accessed their farms from railway sidings nearby at Kakoma and Wycarbah.

I remember my father Roy as a sound-thinking farmer. His farming started in the early 1930s, not too far from his father on a block opened up by his father-in-law, my grandfather Ray Broomfield. His early income came from possuming and pineapple farming. He then started to dairy and grow crops. Considered a good farmer by others in the district, he could always be counted on to successfully grow fodder crops, grain crops and so on, while maintaining high producing dairy stock.

Some of Dad's stories included one about Mr Vin Jones's (MLA) father, who would be so busy all day with his animals and crops that other necessary farming was done at night using a hurricane lamp. He also told me that another neighbour drove to Rockhampton to attend the Rockhampton Agricultural Show, changed into his suit at a relative's house and then walked about two kilometres to the Show, so that his neatly pressed suit wasn't creased.

One of my dad's duties as a young man was to drive the horse and buggy, loaded with holiday luggage from Kalapa, through Rockhampton to Yeppoon every year, whilst his father and family followed in the train.

As they emerged from the Depression of the early 1930s, war was declared, first with Germany, then on 9 December with Japan. During the war years my memories include my Aunt Doris Broomfield as a nursing captain with the Australian Army in the Middle East, three cousins away with the Air Force and army and a lad employed on the farm, Owen Ryan, also in New Guinea.

My elder sister Dawn also rode to school and I recall her as a very good rider. I can still clearly remember watching her on a large chestnut mare that bolted on our way home from school, and admiring how well she stuck to her saddle as it galloped around sharp corners. During the war, I don't know why, but an open trench was dug at the school as some sort of protection from Japanese aircraft.

I remember travelling to town during this period, over some rough black-soil roads in the back of our 1928 Chev Four Ute. Whilst Mum and Dad looked after their business needs, I would wait in the old Victory Theatre in East Street watching newsreels which showed news of the war – quite disturbing for a young boy with a lot of imagination. Thankfully the Japanese didn't land in Kalapa as I had imagined. Until there was some gravel spread on these roads and much later bitumen, driving over them was quite an experience, especially after heavy rain. Dad always kept a set of mud chains for the rear wheels of the Chev. Without them, you often wouldn't be able to move.

Once the Americans entered the war and several thousand were trained and stationed in Rockhampton, all the milk produced in our district was collected by American soldiers in their army trucks. My brother Norm (who spent 63 years in the family home, farming at Kalapa), my sister Dawn and I were usually given lollies and threepenny and sixpenny pieces by two of their regular drivers. Dawn who was five years older

The School Bus – Vin Connor now aged 90, owned the truck.



The local primary school – now at the Rockhampton Heritage Village – was seven kilometres from home and for some of us, was reached on horseback. There was a 'school bus' during my last year at primary school, it was just an open truck. As a child, a broken bit at full gallop on a fast horse was an experience, especially as the jumping off and landing was not well executed!

than me, recalls our Uncle Alex telling a story of putting a big dead snake across the road and watching the two Yanks trying to kill it. He found out afterward that they were terrified of snakes. She also has some gems from those days, recorded in her ever-present autograph book. One, dated 7/5/44 was a 'poem' to mark their leaving.

It read :

*We are the merry milkmen
Who travel Kalapa roads
We haul milk for the army
Where all good milk should go
Now our job is over
We hope we have pleased you all
Think of us as the merry milkmen
And say God bless them all.*

Signed Shorty and Tom

Other entries are :

- John Kearney, US Army. Here wishing you the best of luck throughout the years to come.
- Jack Lee, Louise, Miss USA, Pt 1.B. 116 -A
- Walter Flourre, Detroit Michigan, USA. 26 April 1946 Roses are red, violets are blue, sugar is sweet and so are you.
- Bernie Cehmer, Detroit, Michigan, USA. Here is wishing you good health, good luck and lots of happiness.

Dawn recalls particularly liking John and the fact that they christened Norm 'Blondie' because of his very fair hair. As they were leaving to participate in action in Papua or the islands, you can't help but wonder what became of those friendly people who were a part of our lives for a couple of years.

After the war, life on the land was not easy, however we were able to buy a new McCormack Deering W4 tractor which eventually replaced Dad's team of draught horses. Dad was not a tall man and it used to fascinate me watching him put collars on the bigger horses. For ploughing he would use a six-horse team. Whilst Dad was away ploughing or whatever, Dawn, Norm and I would help with the dairy. For a time we had share farmers look after the dairy, which allowed Dad time to do other work needed around the property.

1951 which was my scholarship school year, proved to be a big setback for our family when the entire milking herd was diagnosed positive with tuberculosis. After

years of culling and improving our herd of milking cattle, TB infected the lot as a result of purchased stock that were infected. Because they shared the same feed and water troughs, the disease was transmitted to every other animal. To rebuild, my father obtained quite a number of new stock from his brother Charles and family from Gogango and from Jock Lehfeltd, Len Jackson and other local producers. A few months later, the dairy started production again. Full credit must be given to my parents' perseverance and determination not to let this terrible time beat them.

For many years, the dense softwood and brigalow scrub harboured a lot of dingo and during drought, the hungry dingoes often savaged our young stock. Once bitten, they quite often had to be put down, as the bite became infected and would not heal. Quite often while Dad was ploughing, he had a dingo follow him up and down the paddock, usually for hours at a time, keeping a respectable distance. If anyone approached with a rifle, they would disappear in a shot. Like the crow, they had an uncanny sense of knowing that the rifle meant harm. We kept a couple of abandoned dingo pups to train as working dogs, however we didn't have too much success with them.

Playing cards with neighbours, singing around our piano with relatives and friends or just visiting, were commonplace. Mum was a good pianist and for some years played at local dances. Learning music was mandatory at school for many, including myself. Mr Jack Ohl tried to instill the basics of the piano and violin – without success for some.

During my teenage years, Norm and I would enjoy our weekend of local tennis and cricket, however at around four o'clock, we would have to pack up and head home on our horses to do the afternoon milking.

Our family story still continues, there is my own story of work in the city; Junior Farmers; national service; marriage and family; of my own farm and partnership in a machinery dealership. As with most, my adult life has been greatly influenced by my early years and the lessons knowingly and sometimes unknowingly, learned from those who have gone before me and those who made up my younger world.



*My father Roy
with his team*

Ethel Sarah Sales (nee Bond)

*Edited from a story to mark Ethel's 100th birthday on 5 February 1987, written by her son Fred,
edited from material supplied by Alan Bond and conversations with daughter Patricia Muller*

There is a monument on the Fitzroy River between Derby and Stanley Streets in front of the IPEX Building, which tells the story of the Archer Brothers discovery of the Fitzroy River in 1855.

Just twenty-five meters away, there stands another monument which marks the arrival of the *Utopia* in 1862. The inscription reads :

'Erected by the descendants of
the pioneers who arrived at Keppel Bay
on 6 November 1862
on the sailing ship *Utopia*, landing at this spot
on 11 November, 1862.'



SS Utopia – Courtesy of Queensland State Library

The *Utopia* was the very first immigrant sailing ship to come directly to Keppel Bay from Plymouth England, having left there on 12 July 1862 with 324 passengers on board. Its capacity was 8949 tonnes and the captain was George Steward.

According to history, the *Utopia* passengers were brought up the Fitzroy River in a small boat called the *Boomerang*. After a 5-day journey, they landed on the spot where the monument now stands. The population of Rockhampton at that date was said to be 618.

Among the immigrants were James Rattenbury aged 25, and his wife Mary aged 26 and they had two sons. They went on to settle around the Alton Downs Road area and to have other children including a daughter Sarah in 1867. Also on board were Richard Bond aged 29 and his wife Mary aged 26. They also had two children with them, a son and a daughter. The Bonds went to Totney Farm on the agricultural reserve at nine-mile creek water hole along the Alton Downs Road. They also had more children including a son Charles in 1864.

After many years Charles Bond and Sarah Rattenbury became friendly and eventually married in 1886 and Charles was working for a member of Sarah's family at a Cooramann Creek property when their first child, a daughter called Ethel Sarah was born in 1887. Following this a son Fred joined the family.

The Bonds moved to the Mt Morgan area where they settled on a property always referred to as 'Box Flat' in the Miranu area a few miles out of Mt Morgan. Whilst at Box Flat, a Catholic Diocese raffled a church building in Mt Morgan and Charles Bond had the winning ticket and so the building was moved out to the Box Flat property to make their house larger and more comfortable.

Charles and Sarah had seven more children while there; they were Percy, Lillian, Lewis, Eli, Cecil, Leslie and Richard.

Ethel can remember as a toddler, walking across the creek to the Box Flat property holding her father's hand, while her mother carried Fred in her arms. She also remembers quite well learning to milk cows at the age of five and some years later, along with her brother, delivering milk around the hills at Mt Morgan. She used to ride a horse sidesaddle. She walked four miles to and from school but because of the work that needed to be done, she only had 18 months schooling.

At about the turn of the century, Charles and son Eli left the rest of the family at Box Flat and went to 'Welney Farm', a property on the banks of the Dee River a few miles before the little township of Dululu. They were there for some time before the rest of the family joined them. Charles and Sarah had two more sons while there, Victor and Frank. Victor died at age 6 in 1912.

The Welney Farm homestead is still standing on the left hand side of the road with the dipping yards directly opposite on the right hand side, on the way from Mt Morgan to Dululu. The present railway siding Boogargan is only a short distance from the homestead.

When Ethel decided to leave home, she went to the old Deeford Hotel owned by Mr & Mrs White, working for 6/- a week. She would get up in the morning at day break or before, milk some cows, separate the cream, make the butter, do the cooking, bake the bread, wash, iron and do other housework, tend to the travellers' and teamster's needs and most times not get to bed before 10.30 pm or later.

The travellers and teamsters those days travelled from Banana to Rannes to Deeford and then on to Westwood and Rockhampton.

After a while, the Whites sold the hotel to Dan Curtain and his wife and it was during this time that Ethel met Charles Sales, who was working on Calliungal Station for Wilson and McDowel. During 1911, Ethel also went working at Calliungal and was there until October 1912 when she and Charles went to Mt Morgan on the first return trip made by the train travelling from Mt Morgan to Wowan.

Martin Webster married Ethel and Charles at the Mt Morgan Methodist Church on 20 November 1912. Witnesses to the marriage were Charles brother Daniel

and Ethel's Aunt Eliza Booth. The wedding breakfast was held at the residence of Eliza Booth.

Just after they were married Ethel and Charles went by horse and buggy to Rannes Station about 44 miles from Mt Morgan where Charles became the Manager. They began their married life there first in an old homestead and then in the new homestead on the big hill on the left, just after crossing the Don River at Rannes. In 1913 daughter Dorothy was born, 1916, son Fred and in 1920 Patricia arrived.

While on Rannes Station, both Ethel and Charles had a hard and sometimes lonely life with Charles often leaving home early in the morning with food packed for the day, not returning home until 8 pm the following night. On one occasion, he had to move a 700 lb weight bullock out of the water trough at Dumphy's Creek and all he had to cut up the beast was a pocketknife with a 3' blade and a blunt tomahawk. Rannes Station was the pilot station for the trials of the new Cactoblastis moth and Charles became very involved, keeping a large meat safe underneath the house in which were stalks of prickly pear in various stages of decay.

During the depression, Ethel would give a meal to the swagmen who walked up the hill at Rannes from their river camp. One night, Charles and Fred walked down to the river after nine o'clock and counted over 10 dozen camps and when they got back home, they got the fire going in the old wood stove, got two large pieces of corned beef and put them into a kerosene tin to cook and Ethel put bread into the oven to bake, knowing what to expect the next day. This sort of thing went on for a long time.

Charles damaged a bone in his right wrist and from that time on had trouble cranking the old type engines to pump water for the stock when there was no wind to operate the windmills. Things got so bad at times, he had trouble cutting a slice of bread on a dinner plate.

During the first week of October 1935, Charles and Ethel left Rannes Station and went on to Rosevale, a property on the road between Rannes and Goovigen that they had owned since 1914. Whilst on Rosevale, Charles was not well and Ethel had a very difficult time. As well, Fred who was living in Mackay had family problems, as a consequence of which, his three daughters Gloria, Valerie and Kathleen, went to Rosevale to be with Ethel who, from that time on, was 'mother' to them. Charles passed away in 1957 and was buried in the North Rockhampton cemetery.

When all three girls came to Rockhampton for schooling, Ethel stuck it out at Rosevale and would not move. She managed to stay on there with help from family and friends for quite some time before moving in to Rockhampton. At age 76 she was still riding her horse to get the cows in. When her horse died, Ethel's children would not let her get another, so she would just whistle the cows in and continued to milk them. At age 92 she would take the axe up to the paddocks and cut out the suckers and prickly pear. Electricity was not connected

to the property until Patricia's son Raymond took it over around 1943.

In Rockhampton, Ethel lived with her daughter Patricia and, despite her isolation from neighbours and company on the property, Patricia says that Ethel took to the city and all its activities with gusto especially after operations to restore her sight were successful. Through Patricia's long involvement with the Rockhampton Senior Citizens Club she attended meetings and was the first of their members to turn 100. To honour this occasion, noted artist Auda McLean who, by a strange twist of fate, had attended Rannes School with Patricia painted her portrait.

At the time of her 100th birthday in 1987, some 125 years after the landing in Rockhampton of her grandparents on board the *Utopia*, Ethel's three children had given her 11 grandchildren and 24 great grand children. Each one of them could be justly proud of their forebears, whose determination and courage had brought them this far.

Ethel Sarah Sales passed away in 1999 just two days short of her 103rd birthday.

Ethel's brother Leslie, married Dolly Garner (from the story 'A Woman of Pluck') and Alan Bond is their son.



Ethel Sarah Sales at the time of her 100th birthday.

Shout for the Bar

Recollections of the life and times of the Dululu Hotel and its patrons.

By Madeline Rose Peacock

Madeline Peacock was the daughter of James Mitchell Duthie and Sophia Ann (Sissy) Duthie, nee Green. She was born in 1916 while the family was living at Mt Morgan. She was the second eldest of six siblings – Les born 1912, Dorothy born 1918, Noel born 1922, Beryl born 1924 and Norma born 1926. She penned this story in 1975.

As well as recording historical detail, Madeline paints an amusing and believable picture of life in a country pub with her words and I'm sure there will be many from the Dululu area and beyond who will recognise themselves and others in her story. Madeline's daughter tells me that her mother was a prolific scribbler of stories. They would be found on bits of paper and in exercise books all over the place.

Madeline passed away on 11 November 2000 and this story is reprinted with the kind permission of her brother Mr Les Duthie and her daughter Mrs Desma Blair.

Every old 'country pub' has its own special history and I believe it should be preserved for future generations.

My parents, Mr & Mrs J Duthie, built the Dululu Hotel in 1935. This building had previously been the Railway Boarding House in Mt Morgan. The land and licence was purchased from Mrs Alice Dodge who conducted the first Dululu Hotel, which was destroyed by fire in 1934. The present building was purchased in 1935 for £400 complete with furniture, beds, tables and chairs even down to the chamber pots which were a standard part of bedroom fittings in those days. Mr George Pitcher, Mr Dinsdale and workmen were the carpenters who had the task of removing the building and erecting it at its present site.

would be thirsty on this day, but a customer arrived and asked for a bottle of beer. With very shaky hands I opened the bottle and thus started my career as a bar tender. Another day a horseman appeared, tied his horse to a post and advanced to the bar. He said 'G'day girl, gimme a drink of ginger ale'. He gulped the drink down and when I said 'six-pence please' he slammed his hand on the bar and said loudly 'Don't be so bloody mean' and stomped off.

Another incident I remember was a lady arriving with an angry look and a switch from a tree. She camp-drafted her husband back to the cotton patch he had sneaked away from when he'd obviously decided that a cold beer was better than warm water from a billycan. These few events caused me to think that the hotel kitchen was the place for me. There my sister Dorothy and I reigned supreme for

years. We had a first class dining room with white linen tablecloths and serviettes. We catered for cricket dinners and footballers, our boarders and travellers. No one was refused a meal. I believe my sisters and I cut more sandwiches for more people for nothing, than anyone in the universe. Mother would send someone out for sandwiches for the bar, or a cup of tea for a needy soul and no money changed hands. It is fascinating to remember the prices for goods and services in



The Dululu Hotel. This picture was taken in 1979 on a day when it had 35 cars parked outside.

While the hotel was being built, we were required to have a temporary bar. My father erected a counter in the iron garage at the rear of the hotel, and we were in business. We had many callers in this shanty and had lots of fun. I remember serving my first beer at this venue. My father was working at his beloved farm and mother was in Rockhampton on business and I was left to mind the bar. I was terrified and prayed that nobody

those days. Some I recall :

Meals were 2/-
Dinner, bed and breakfast 6/-
Beer was 6d a glass
A nip of rum was 6d
Full board was £1.10 with laundry included
A bottle of wine was 4/6d

One Sunday, we decided to charge an extra 6d for 'Sunday Dinner'. One regular Sunday diner refused to pay the extra money and huffed off. The next time he came, we collected the money first!

When we commenced trading the hotel hours were from 8 am to 8 pm. They were later changed to 10 am to 10 pm which was more suitable. No Sunday trading was permitted. Mother was fined £50 once for serving three chaps in the bar on a Sunday morning (what a terrible crime).

Over the years this pub would have seen many changes in social life and drinking habits. No ladies were allowed to drink in the public bar in our first years of hotel keeping. You were not allowed to serve liquor to anyone under the age of 21.

The first boarders who came to stay at the hotel were Mr and Mrs Brady Doyle and son Neil. Brady was working on the bridge construction, which was almost complete at this time. Mr Frank Reddy was our first schoolteacher boarder. Then Mr Jack Thistlethwaite who taught at Burneba. Some folks might still remember that at one time he had difficulty finding his own school. Many teachers boarded at the hotel, well remembered would be Mr Eddie Mitchell and Mr Ces Finlay and many more.

In the early days, one thing that seemed to have a great impact on our lives was the wireless set. Mr Tom Kirby and Mr Les Duthie introduced these wonderful things to the folks in our district. Mother purchased a mantle model Astor. These sets were connected to a wet battery and three dry batteries. We listened to the world's news and the serials, *Dad and Dave*, *Greenbottle*, *Hop Harrigan*, etc. The children could have birthday calls over the air and hearing the Melbourne Cup run was a thrill. This hotel will surely remember Mother putting large seats in front of the wireless so the children could hear the Cup being run. (I think she sneaked them a raspberry drink also.)

When the Aussie cricketers were in England playing for the Ashes, our two school teacher boarders would trundle the wireless set upstairs to their bedroom, rig it up to the batteries and listen all night. Next morning two weary chaps would struggle downstairs and put the set back in its place.

On 1 September 1939, I can remember standing in front of this set listening to Robert Menzies our Prime Minister announcing that Britain had declared war on Germany and this included Australia's involvement.

There are memories of commercial travellers who came to hotels selling products from Rockhampton. These salesmen would call at our hotel on Monday, travel down the valley and return on Friday. They would shout for the bar with their spending allowance to entice people to drink their particular brand of spirits or beer.

I remember many of these chaps very well; one of them was a Heinz Product Salesman. One Friday he called in on his return from Biloela, he enquired about the whereabouts of a local by the name of Bert who was clearing land and burning timber in a paddock close to the river. He said 'Give me two stubbies and I'll

take him a drink' and set off on foot. When he finally reached Bert he said 'I bought you a couple of stubbies to drink, but it was so hot I drank them on the way'. Take a bow Ricky Rojahn!

One poor commercial traveller arrived at our hotel early one morning clad only in a pair of knee length underpants and a singlet. This poor wet fellow had waded across a flooded stream and got a lift to our place. A hot cup of tea and dry clothes were very welcome.

Over the 60 years of its existence the building stood while many things changed. At its beginning, Dululu was a lively township, when everyone brought their cream to the railway station three times a week. This was taken to the Wowan Butter Factory. On these days, Beaumonts would bring their meat from Wowan Butcher Shop and serve customers in the small shop in our street. Mr Davies serviced this shop later.

Mr George Driver delivered fresh bread to our local store three times a week and there were beautiful buns and pies available on Fridays. In the early days there were between 40 – 60 children going to school. Later the school closed but the building still stands. It and Mrs Kapernick's house are the two oldest building in Dululu at present. Horses gave way to cars and all types of machines and planes and American Jeeps travelled our roads during the war years. The trains were our lifeline and these busy lines handled all our requirements. They were essential parts of our lives then it seemed, we blinked and they were gone forever. Good roads, electricity, heavy transports and passenger coaches took over and have become the accepted thing in our times.

During the war years, life took on a more serious direction. I was married and went to live on the land with my husband Bert. At one time Bert grew a crop of cotton over the river on Cue's property. At this time the Land Army Girls were in our district doing rural work. As no other workmen were available, Bert employed them to harvest his cotton crop. Mr Grice who was in charge of these workers transported them from their camp at Wowan.

Our Bert milked his cows each morning and quickly left for the cotton patch to watch these pretty young women pick his cotton. He boiled the billy for smoko's for them, bailed the cotton and wished he had planted a larger crop. Good job he was married or I think we would have lost him.

War years were hard on hotel keepers as there was nothing to sell, no beer, no soft drinks. Everything was rationed. People came to stay at the hotel from the coast, owing to the threat of war. They cared for themselves and luckily brought their own supplies with them. Sister Bub (Beryl) and small son came home to the hotel as Bub's husband was serving in New Guinea. She and Tal (Norma) helped Mother with the hotel chores. Brother Noel was a farmer and helped our father on the cattle property. The war ended in 1945. There was lots of happiness and sadness in our township. Brother Les came home from service in the Air Force. George, Bub's

husband came home from New Guinea. Dos (sister Dorothy) and her husband Norm came back from the Cairns area where they had been stationed constructing landing strips for warplanes.

The years passed and in 1949 we left the farm and came to live at the hotel. Bert worked in the railway at this time and I assisted Mother in the running of the hotel. After a long illness, Mother passed away in December 1949. She was 57 years old and was sadly missed by her family and friends. In this year we bought the hotel and I became licensee. The licence remained in my name for almost 25 years. It was an interesting life with hard work and long hours.

We had two more children whilst we lived in the hotel. Desma was eight and Michael was 10 when Bevan was born. He was loved and spoiled by everyone, especially Mr and Mrs Hansen our storekeepers. Two years later Joy was born, very tiny and lively as a cricket – everyone's favourite. She had a friend who lived next door called Doreen Somerfield. One day these four-year-old darlings could not be found. I was serving a number of people in the bar and Val our little maid was in a panic. Then a truck slowly drove past the hotel bar and sitting in the front seat waving and calling 'Hello Mum' was Joy. It was the sanitary truck driven by Reggie Mac. They had been following him on his rounds and he gave them a lift home.

When Joy was one, Bert received a phone call from Vizes' Casket Office in Rockhampton advising him that B Peacock and C Ellis had won first prize in the Golden Casket – £6000. This was a very hot day in January and many people were in the bar. This news was received with great acclaim. Much celebrating followed this announcement, salesmen appeared from nowhere and a good time was had by all. After the first night's party, Bert asked me two questions – 'Where was the winning ticket?' and 'Did he sign anything?'. Firstly, I had rescued the ticket as it was being passed from one tiddy customer to another. Secondly, the car salesmen were told politely to wait till we received the money before doing business. They didn't mind, after a couple of free drinks they forgot what they came for. I had a holiday at the beach after this event.

Being a hotelkeeper in those days entailed more than just managing your premises. There were many more requirements. First of all, you had to have a knowledge of first aid. Over a period of time we had a number of injured people arrive at the hotel. Broken arms, broken legs, a baby having convulsions one night and the 'Stork' paid a visit to a lady in a taxi from Baralaba. This occurred in our main street in front of the Hotel. This little guy went to hospital wrapped in a Dululu Hotel towel. Patricia Bartley a nursing sister who had dined with us that night was of great assistance on this occasion.

Another time a motorist collided with a horse quite close to the township. While all the locals were giving the poor old racehorse his last rites, I was bathing the

injured driver's head and removing glass from his face. Later our headmaster's wife, Peggy Sutcliffe – a retired nursing sister, took over first aid duties.

There were lots of times when the river rose over the bridge and traffic stopped. We had lots of boarders on these occasions. One time a railway man running a line saw a truck stuck in the mud a few miles up the road. Some men staying with us took their trucks up the track and towed the vehicle home. There was a lady driver and five or six small children. They were like drowned rats. I didn't have a spare room until some chaps decided to sleep on the floor in another room. After two days when the river went down she took off for her home at Monto. I was most grateful when she sent me a telegram of her safe arrival. It was pleasing when people acknowledged something you had done for them. One man arrived at the hotel quite early in the morning. He had taken delivery of a farm tractor and was driving it from Rockhampton to the Goovigen area. This weary fellow told Bert he would like a beer. Bert said, 'A cup of tea and a sandwich would be better' and sent him to the kitchen. After a little rest he continued on his journey and told this story many times.

Another time Bert gave a young man 10/- and told him that he may get a job on a cattle property in another area. A long time passed before the young man came into the bar and asked if the same man owned the pub. He was told, 'Yes' and he handed over 30/-, three times the amount Bert had given him. He said, 'Thanks, I got a job' and off he went.

I remember Dululu was a happy township with lots of young people, a dance every Saturday night with girls and older ladies all wearing pretty dresses and wearing hats and gloves when you went to town. Men all had a dark suit and always wore this to all functions. You could take measurements at home and send to tailors to have your suits made. One time two fellows arrived at our hotel and asked for a room to get dressed in. They each carried a cardboard box with Wolfe and Sons written on the sides. Later on they came to me with a problem. There was no buttonhole in the lapels on their coats in which to put orange blossoms. Here they sat while I sewed them on their suits with a needle and black cotton. Away they went to the wedding, the bridegroom and the best man.

As I sit quietly writing, I have come to the conclusion that it is impossible to put in print 60 years of life's memories in one small story. Things that are uppermost in my memory may be boring to the reader. I do remember all the folks who assisted in the running of the hotel over the years – Sheppy, Sommy, Glad, Dora, Val, Joan and Joe – all faithful helpers in our time. Last but not least our two lovely daughters Joy the youngest and Desma our mainstay until a young chap called Kev stole her away. Joy helped until we sold the hotel later on.

At this time my mind goes back to the musical evenings we held at the hotel. Dorrie Kapernick and her husband assisted with entertainment. The musical

Olsens often called, Bert Moya played the guitar and singing Wilf Parter was a regular entertainer. The Lawrence family were good singers. Molly liked to render *The Drover's Dream* on occasions, which was well received. This hotel must have made an impression on a lot of people as many letters and cards came to this venue over the years from London, Scotland, France, Disneyland, Sydney, Melbourne, Tasmania and New Zealand. The Johanson boys sent us a card when they were playing tennis in England.

This chance meeting in the bar is worth recording. One man was from Sydney and was visiting his in-laws in Dululu, the other fellow was a bank manager from many miles down the Valley who always called on his way to town. There were only three people in the bar and when the bank manager was talking to me, the Sydney fellow recognised his voice and called him by a nickname. They had not met since they served in the air force in Bangkok many years before. I believe they went home to the in-laws and talked all night.

As this story comes to an end, I hope the readers will enjoy my memories of the life and times of the Dululu Hotel. Sometimes I think I would like to go back in time and sit quietly in the bar and by chance I may hear voices of old time customers, the tinkling of glasses and a commercial traveller saying, 'Shout the bar'.

The following piece must have been one of Madeline's favourites as it is attached to her story. Having read her story, one can understand why it appealed. At the end, all it has by way of identification of the Author are the letters AU.

The Perfect Publican.

A publican must be a democrat, an autocrat, an acrobat and a doormat. He must be able to entertain Prime Ministers, pickpockets, pirates, philanthropists and the police and be on both sides of the political fence; a footballer, golfer, bowler, tennis player, dart champion and a pigeon fancier.

As he has to settle arguments and fights, he must be a qualified boxer, wrestler, weightlifter, sprinter and a peacemaker.

He must always look immaculate when drinking with bankers, swankers, commercial travellers and company representatives, even though he has just stopped a 'beer throwing' contest in the public bar.

To be successful, he must keep the bars full, the house full, the tanks and the storeroom full, the customers full and not get full himself. He must have bar staff who are clean, honest, quick workers and thinkers, and at all times to be on the boss's side, the customer's side - and stay on the inside of the bar.

To sum up, he must be outside, inside, offside, glorified, sanctified, crucified, stupefied, cross-eyed, and if he is not the strong silent type, there's always retirement.

AU



*Madeline Rose Peacock (nee Duthie)
aged 80.*

Voices from the Past

Edited from the Peak Downs Telegram Newspaper

Contributed by Les Fowler.

The 1916 Flood



APPALLING DEATH ROLL



SIXTY FATALITIES



HEART RENDING SCENES



CLERMONT NEARLY DESTROYED



Thus screamed the newspaper headlines of the

PEAK DOWNS TELEGRAM

on Saturday, 6 January 1917

As a result of his involvement in Down Memory Lane Book II, author Les Fowler received copies of Peak Downs Telegram newspapers produced at the time of the town's Centenary in 1962. These papers give a fascinating insight into the importance of the event for its inhabitants.

They talk of the early explorers and the following squatters, the gold rushes; the booms and busts of the copper mines; bushranging; the trials of the pioneers; the Chinese problems; native troubles; gold escorts; the discovery and exploitation of the world's richest coal deposit at Blair Athol; the floods as detailed below (leading to the town being rebuilt on the present site); the coming of the railway; the advent of motor vehicles and the eventual speeding up of road construction; closer settlement and the introduction of a new race of landholders – grain farmers; the air age with the district being served by regular air services; some of the personalities; and many others too numerous to mention.

The celebrations began on 22 September with an Inter School Sports Day and a Centenary Ball and Monday, 24 September was declared a public holiday. Celebrations continued through until Sunday, 30 September, concluding with a rodeo and Kennel Club's Centenary Championship Show.

Along with the Centenary information, the papers give fascinating information such as the fact that white cotton briefs for 4/6d pair, navy athletic singlets at 4/11d pair and towels at 8/- each, could be purchased at Burgess and Sons who were giving 10 percent off for all cash articles purchased during Centenary Week. NW Massey & Co in Jellicoe Street had a 1953 Holden Utility – registered and runs well – full price £150 and a 1951 Ford Prefect Sedan – new paint and registration – full price £100. The Rainbow Theatre was showing 'The 7th Voyage of Sinbad' in dynamation and technicolor to be followed by 'Who was That Lady' with Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh and Turners Electrical was offering to trade your old washing machine on a Westinghouse heater and timer model washing machine priced at 29 guineas, or a Pope fashion model at 69 guineas. The fare from Clermont – Mackay Coach Service was £3 10/- single and it was 10/- for gents and 5/- for ladies to get in to the Centenary Gold Cup Meeting at the Clermont Diggers Race Club where there was a six race programme with £400 prize money on offer. As well, on the occasion of the Centenary, the Clermont Historical Society made available an excellent reproduction of the 1916 paper headlined above. Exact facts and figures of this tragedy are no doubt recorded in detail in historical documents, but the account in the paper has such a graphic, 'on the spot', heartrending immediacy about it that the shock and horror of the journalist/s can almost be felt. We thank The Clermont Historical Society for giving permission to produce the following edited version.....

Immediately following upon the Christmas holidays, and with appalling suddenness, the town of Clermont has been smitten with a disaster compared with which all its previous troubles were the veriest trifles. The flood that some of the older residents have often feared has come upon us at last, and the fearful havoc wrought will, it is safe to say, never be effaced. Many a time has it been said that the chief business part of the town was unsafe, but since the 1870s there has been no flood to do any considerable damage and the unexpected has only happened once in forty or fifty years. That once however, is quite enough, and it is safe to say that the next big flood is not likely to sweep away so many buildings in Drummond Street, for they won't be there, because it is not likely that they will all be replaced.

The present visitation, with its awful death roll, its tremendous destruction of valuable property, and its pitiable destitution, is a calamity.

On Wednesday, 28 December about midday light rain commenced to fall in Clermont, there having been a little during the previous night. It was learned by telephone that rain started at several other places about the same time on Wednesday as in Clermont. Logan Downs reported that it was raining heavily about midday and also Twin Hills and Lanark. In Clermont there were several light showers during the afternoon, and about nightfall the rain began to fall heavily. All through the night it continued, being driven in sheets by a strong wind. The fall was so extraordinarily heavy and continuous that many people were apprehensive during the night that the creek might come over the next day. Constable Shepherd, who was on duty, found that at midnight the creek was over the banks, and at once began to give warning, but unfortunately for themselves a good number did not heed it, and refused to move. He went and reported to Sergeant Loney who found it difficult to believe that a flood was coming on so suddenly. However all the police set to work to warn the people on the creek flat, but only a few came over the bridge.

Up to daylight it was Sandy Creek that had been bringing down all the floodwater and only for the very rapid rise there was nothing to indicate anything more than the last two or three floods was coming. Soon after daylight, however, Wolfgang Creek came down over its banks, and then the oft-repeated prophecies of those who said that terrible things would happen when the two creeks came down together were fulfilled.

By half past six the water had just got over the level of the 1893 and 1896 floods and from that time on disasters fell thick and heavy on people and property in the low lying parts of the town, rapidly extending to portions which have long been thought to be well out of the reach of flood waters. To give an example, Mr Behr's shop was built with due regard to flood and the floor was above the level of the last two or three.

As an illustration of the fearfully rapid rise of the floodwater and the force of the current it might be mentioned that a groom from the Commercial Hotel

went into Moller's shop for meat and was unable to get back. Another instance was the experience of Mr T H Ricketts, who left his home in Box Street to get his horses, left them at his yard, and went to the lagoon bridge to see how the street was faring. On his return very shortly afterwards he found his house flooded and neighbours taking his wife and family out, but only just in time, as the water reached a depth of six and a half feet in his house.

Employees in the shops commencing business and all the business people of Drummond Street who resided in their premises, and the occupants and boarders in the five hotels were compelled to look on at the horrifying spectacle of a rising torrent pouring through Drummond Street like a mill race.

Just before seven o'clock the water touched the bridge decking, and just at this time occurred what may have been the first fatality. Herbert Wing Long made for the bridge from the bank corner. At first he seemed not to seriously regard the current, and it bore him out of his course before he was aware of it and he got too far down before realising his danger. He threw away his umbrella and struck out, but was carried away and drowned. A few minutes afterwards Mr F J Young, Stock Inspector, came riding a pony down the street. Mr Searle called him to come into the bank, but he turned for the bridge. As soon as his horse got broadside on to the stream he was swept off his feet and carried down, the rider guiding him with perfect confidence. No more was seen of Mr Young till his body was picked up on the flat on Saturday.

At this time the water was rising at the rate of nine or ten feet an hour, and was foaming in a cataract over the bridge, being of course banked up high by the truss work. No one seeing the force of the current could expect the structure to stand it long, and within an hour after the deck was covered the top work went crash, tearing away the decking, one of the concrete abutments, and the whole span, leaving only part of one of the rows of piles standing.

About eight o'clock the floor of the Clermont Clubhouse was reached and this strong looking and comparatively new structure floated slowly off till it felt the full force of the current, when it touched some obstruction and collapsed. About the same time Moller's fine new ice works and his butcher's shop had collapsed. Not long before a number of people had been seen on the roof, but it afterwards transpired that they were Mr and Mrs Behr who had first refuged on their own roof, and left it to join Mr Moller, Jack Knight and Jack Harper. Mr Behr's shop had been carried away very shortly after they had left it and scrambled on to Moller's roof. The fate of all these was in doubt till next morning when it transpired that by means of a ladder which Mr Harper caught as it floated by, they had reached the balcony of the Federal Hotel.

This building was in great jeopardy, and indeed was literally falling or being battered to pieces. Shortly after the party had reached it, part of the back balcony

fell, and with it Mr Moller, John Wicks, Fred Hilland Mr Bianchi's two boys Alf and Frank. It is said that Alf, who is 15 dived in to save Frank, who is eleven. Both boys were saved, Frank swimming to the roof of Griffin's store, and Alf going a long way down stream and being found in a tree next morning. Frank stuck to the store roof pluckily and cheerfully all day, and when the water subsided he clambered off and went to join Mr Searle's family, who were on the ceiling of the bank. Hill was picked up next morning. There were lots of brave deeds and rescues during the flood, but nothing was pluckier than this boy's conduct, and the crowd of spectators who saw him drop into the water and gain shelter gave vent to feelings of relief and admiration.

Mr Moller was a good swimmer, and when the balcony gave way dived without hesitation into the torrent. He was seen swimming strongly nearly two miles down, but having a heavy overcoat and boots he must have been greatly handicapped. His body has not been recovered.

John Wicks also made a game struggle and was seen swimming with the current in apparent ease, but the water was full of cruel dangers in the way of sheets of iron and timber, which were fatal to many a good swimmer. Some were dashed against trees and hurt, and the very best swimmer could but keep afloat in the hope of being carried to high ground.

Mr J G Druery, after lighting his fire and making tea, came over the bridge to see that the Fire Brigade hose was put up out of the water. This would be about six o'clock and unfortunately the act of looking after the property of the Fire Brigade, of which he is secretary, may have helped to take his attention from the fact that water was rising at an unprecedented rapid rate. When he got home some neighbours including Mrs Robert Davidson, Mrs John Burns and the Healy brothers, asked for shelter at his house, showing that it was higher than the surrounding houses and might be safe out of flood mark. The water soon reached the floor, and came up so rapidly that while he was lifting up the piano to get it out of reach of the water, it nearly caught him up. It was a matter of a very short time when the family and all with them were refuting on the roof. Mrs Druery fell off the roof and was recovered from the other side of the house, but was unconscious. While Mrs Druery was being attended to, little Lance Druery slipped off. The house went some distance before breaking up. Druery and his eldest boy Edgar were rescued in trees next morning, also Robert Davidson and four Healy Bros, the others being lost. About the same time all the houses in Wofang Street went away.

The residence of Mr S J Carroll, like others, was being anxiously watched, and Mr Carroll was seen throwing children on the veranda roof. As they fell off he again threw them up till the house went away. Mr & Mrs Carroll and their four children were all drowned. Mr Harry Carsten and his wife and child were swept away, but Carsten himself was rescued from a tree next morning.

Mr and Mrs Crawford were seen going down on their house till it was wrecked against a tree. Mr Crawford's body was recovered in the police paddock on Saturday. Mrs Crawford was carried down three miles and was only rescued after spending all night and most of next day alone. She is now in the hospital suffering from a badly injured hand, and also of course from shock and exposure.

Mrs F J Young was seen to drown after attempting to climb to safety on the verandah of the old Joint Stock Bank. Mrs Carsten, Snr and her two daughters, Eva and Gretta, were seen to be washed away, the two girls swimming strongly, but they were never seen again. It transpired later that a Miss Rose Harris, a lady saddler with a shop in town, was responsible for the saving of a number of lives.

When the post office at nine o'clock was opened it was found that all communication had been interrupted, and the general feeling of gloom increased. At about 9 o'clock the water was two feet over the Court House floor, much higher on the back walls, and rising rapidly. Soon afterwards the whole building lifted and swung across towards the lagoon till the front touched a post and the main part of the building collapsed. The offices floated some distance down the lagoon carrying everything, including the safe, which is probably in the bed of the lagoon.

The water was now about two feet deep in the Town Hall and it appeared to be in great danger, but came through without much damage. The water became stationary at one o'clock and remained so for about half-an-hour. Then it began to slowly subside dropping four feet in about an hour. From then it very gradually subsided and at dark the footpaths on the high side of Drummond Street were only a few inches under water. Still the current was too strong to allow anyone to cross. And those imprisoned in the various buildings not wrecked and also it must be said in the Federal Hotel which was badly wrecked, had to remain till two or three o'clock next morning.

The rapidity with which the water rose prevented many from getting away from what proved to be a veritable death-trap, and in some cases terrible anxiety was experienced by the families of some of those who were in different business places and unable to communicate with their friends. Many a one spent the Thursday night without sleep and prayed for dawn. Those who had been swept away but managed to secure themselves in trees were no doubt equally anxious for daylight, for they suffered fearfully from exposure to the wind and rain, and the hours of darkness must have dragged out into seeming weeks of misery and doubt as to their fate.

There are certainly some bodies that are not yet recovered, and almost certainly some that will never be found. The work of recovering them was commenced as soon as daylight permitted on Friday morning, and was carried out under very difficult conditions. The flat below the lagoon, and the police paddock, where many of the bodies were found at first was very difficult to

travel, the searchers going down into the soft ground frequently nearly up to their knees.

Many men gave their services cheerfully to this and to other arduous tasks but it is painful to relate that many others did nothing whatever except to look on at the sufferings of some and the hard labour of others. Yes! Some of those who did not assist in any useful work did something. They systematically stole everything they could conveniently lay hands on as long as they thought it might be done with safety. Such people are a disgrace to their country, and the worst punishment that the law allows seems utterly inadequate for the crime of pilfering the scattered goods of ruined men and women.

Next morning it was found that while people and property were being destroyed wholesale on the north side others on the south had made a run on the provision store, and a meeting was called in the Shire Office, the Police Magistrate presiding, at which it was decided to commandeer all foodstuffs and if deemed advisable all other necessities. At this meeting looting was strongly condemned, and drastic measures threatened for the offence. However, it was of course eventually decided to deal with offenders according to British law, which under the circumstances is somewhat slow.

A relief system was organised and food tickets arranged for. All stores were ordered to be removed to the Railway Goods Shed, including what damaged stock might be found. A very limited ration scale was arranged including four ounces of bread per day for each adult. Willing hands were found for all branches of the work of collection and distribution and all storekeepers loyally supported the scheme. By Saturday morning it was in working order. A regular system of searching for goods and bodies was instituted and under all the circumstances the work ran smoothly.

When the homeless folk from the lower parts of the town began to arrive many offers of assistance were forthcoming. The Rev Father McElhinney opened the convent kitchen, some of the rooms and the school; this was a blessing to over forty people. The Rev W R Hand placed the kindergarten open to those needing shelter and some were accommodated in the State School. The Methodist Church was also placed at the disposal of a number of people. Hundreds were taken into private houses.

The Police Magistrate made good use of some of the Blair Athol men as special constables, and on New Year's Day, the Police Magistrate held a Police Court in the Shire Office. William Mitchell was fined £5 or one month for having goods in his possession, others appeared on bail on a similar charge. The Postmaster Mr Walsh in the absence of the linemen, with Mr Woodland and railway men, started on the line down to Capella, and after great difficulty got the wire to Retro from whence it was taken on to Capella by the railway men. They returned on Sunday night, and on Monday night the welcome news was received that there was communication direct to Rockhampton. Meantime the Postmaster at Black Ridge had got word away round by Twin Hills whence it was telegraphed.

On Sunday morning Mr A W Appleton and Mr Frank Graham arrived from Capella. They started the previous morning, and walked and trollied all the way up, staying at Langton on Saturday night. It was then learned to what a serious extent the railway had been damaged.

On Tuesday the traffic manager Mr Chambers and the engineer, Mr Quinlan arrived by trolley. Mr Quinlan stated that unless under exceptionally favourable circumstances it would take fully six weeks to make the line from Capella to Clermont trafficable. The chief damage was found at Capella where the bridge is intact but over thirty chains of road washed away, Ebor Creek where the bridge is practically destroyed and Retro where one bank is entirely washed away from the bridge. They reported that the flood at the Comet was fifteen feet above the highest record. Mr Chambers said he hoped to have a trolley service working in a few days.

It is apparently impossible to get an accurate record of the rainfall as all the gauges ran over, but Wolfgang registered 21 inches in the 21 hours and there is little doubt that the fall was fully 24 inches.

Drummond Street is an awful wreck and one of the wonders is the portion of the Federal Hotel standing across the street which proved an ark of refuge for more than twenty people for so many hours. Some of the business people emphatically assert that they will not on any account occupy Drummond Street again. There is little doubt that the total damage to property far exceeds £100 000 in the town area alone. News still continues to arrive of destruction of stock in the country.

At a meeting on Tuesday night it was found that stocks were planning out better than anticipated and the bread allowance was doubled to the great relief of all families.

The death roll on Wednesday was sixty, of whom fifty-one have been recovered and buried. It will be some little time before it can be said with certainty that the fatality list is closed and quite possible some will never be reported.

In the present state of the town finances it is manifestly impossible to find the money to effect repairs to street, roads and bridges, and the business people who had just come through a very severe struggle on account of the drought, will find the greatest difficulty in getting on their feet again.

As soon as the news got to the bigger centres urgent telegrams began to arrive expressing sympathy and offering assistance. Mr Dumigan, Head Teacher of the State School, wired to the Police Magistrate from Killarney 'Make fullest use of house and contents.' Mr W H Kettle wired from Rockhampton that Rockhampton merchants were joining with Railway Department to push food supplies and citizens were establishing a relief fund with liberal response. Sgt Power, Emerald wired under instructions that the Home Department would pay all cost of provisions, and enquired if provisions were required to be sent from Emerald. The Mayor, Alderman J G Poll was also the recipient of a great number of messages (from) the Premier, Mr Ryan, Mr McLean, Springsure where a

'list' was opened, Mr W H Harris, Chairman of the Emerald Shire Council who offered all assistance in the power of Emerald people. Mr Macaulay, Rockhampton, wired his sympathy and £25. Mr Morrison, Mayor of Rockhampton advised the sincere sympathy of the Rockhampton people and stated that a list had been opened and £325 subscribed (at the time of printing this had swelled to £1000). The Mayor of Brisbane, Alderman Diddams, advised that a relief meeting was a pronounced success and £292 subscribed. Mr R H Edkins, Chairman of the Longreach Shire, wired £10 towards assisting to relieve immediate necessities.

The following is an (abbreviated) list of fatalities: (number in brackets indicates whole family numbers or those of the same surname)

Bennett, Burns, Chambers, Carroll (6), Carsten (5), Crawford, Davidson (2),

Druery (3), Foster, Flavel (4), Hall, Hooper, Jorgensen, Lang, Mitchell, Moller, Mansfield, Nasser, Dubbo, Ryan, Olsson (2), O'Donnell (3), Pohl, Robins (3), Reid, Sporer, Simpson, Stuart, Wing Long, Wicks, Young (2), Sing (2).

Not identified :

Two boys, one swagman, four women.

Then follows a list of 35 businesses and residences that were completely swept away finishing with the fact that 'C Quinlan's which was moved off the blocks, being the only portion of a residence left in four adjoining blocks.'

Details of subscription lists follow with a note from the Editor 'It has not been found practicable to gather full information about many matters, but we hope to publish it next week. Meantime the *Telegram* will be thankful if persons having knowledge of rescue work or experiences will let us have full particulars. As it is impossible to supply the demand for papers, 'Flood Specials' will be printed and on sale at the office. Price 3d or 2/- a dozen.'

And as a comment on life: 'On Thursday it was learned from good authority that the navvies at Capella had struck for **more money**. Such is human nature – of a kind.'

Edited from original material, by Glenys Kirkwood.



Clermont flood damaged houses 1916 – Courtesy of Queensland State Library

The Bell and Other Tales

By Anne (Adelaide Annie) Baraclough

Edited from an oral tape

The bell came out to Australia in 1855. It was on board a ship that brought my husband Jack's grandmother, Carolyn Pinnow, then aged 12, and her family here from Germany. It was at a time when the Australian Government was encouraging immigration and people came from everywhere. I don't know the name of the ship they came on but I do know it took them months to get here. The family story has it that there were a number of children on the ship and the captain asked Carolyn if she would look after them. She agreed and was given the bell to muster them every morning when she would entertain them on deck.

On arrival in Sydney, the captain is said to have thanked Carolyn for her help and offered her the bell as a keepsake.

nobody nowadays seems to have heard of it. They ran a liquor bar they called a hotel, with a small one-room shop beside it. It was at this time in 1893 that Blair Athol became established and a provisional school was started two miles south of the town and two miles north of the Venus mine. They apparently didn't have a school bell, so Carolyn's bell was loaned to the school.

The first schoolteacher at the Blair Athol Provisional School was Mary Ann Derret. She was the first to ring the bell at the Blair Athol school and in an extraordinary coincidence, Mary Ann Derret's son, Jack Neish and I now live around the corner from each other in Rockhampton, so it seems to me that after almost 150 years in Australia, part of the bell's history has come full circle.



This Venus mine, which was about four miles away from Blair Athol, was very very rich. Jack's mother told me all about it and how there were lots of Chinese there. It was alluvial and you only had to dig maybe three or four feet and then you'd hit ironstone and you knew you had gold. She said the diggers used to come in with their gold in a little calico bag to be weighed and the family would buy the gold which I suppose they then on sold at a profit. There were hardly any women and the diggers all lived in tents. There wasn't a lot to do around there and she told me that many of them would say 'Well Missus, let's know when it's cut out' and they would just camp around the hotel and drink their profit and then they'd go and get some more gold.

The Pinnows settled down around Beenleigh and are said to have been the first ones to grow sugar cane in Queensland. There are still Pinnows in that area.

Carolyn eventually married Adolph Magee in 1867 in Brisbane. Because German nationals were given a difficult time during the First World War, this name was anglicised to Madge. Somehow or other they, and the bell, came to Clermont, probably as a result of the offer of 65 acres of land for settlement. Their land was a couple of miles outside Clermont and was on a 99-year lease at the princely sum of 5/- per year. That land was in our family for a long time because when my husband Jack and I were married, the lease came up again and it was renewed. It was £25 a year then.

Time moved on and Jack's mother and father, Ida Sophia Augusta (Madge) and Frank Barraclough and his aunt and uncle, Mary (Hudson) and Dolph Madge settled about 15 miles outside of Clermont at The Venus. The Venus was a very rich alluvial goldfield and

The scales they used to weigh the gold all that time ago have been in the family for 111 years that I know of and have pride of place in my home, along with the bell.

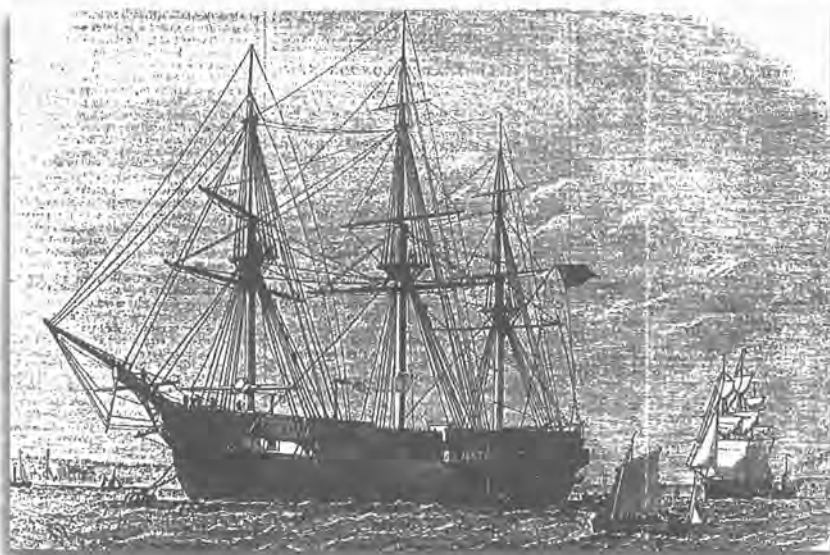


Jack's side of the family now has six generations who have lived at Clermont and on my side there are five generations. My maternal grandfather came out in 1873 and he ended up settling at Copperfield four miles from Clermont. Copperfield is an older settlement than Clermont and although my maternal grandfather came from England, a great number of settlers around Clermont were of German heritage. There was also one French person I can recall. Sheep farming was the main activity of later years.

My maternal grandfather Jack Stagg's tale, is as interesting as Caroline's. He was born in Hungerford, Wiltshire in England in 1856. He came to Australia in 1873 at the age of 17. When he was nine years old his family lived in Wales where his father and his brother had already been killed down in the pits. His mother was determined that the same fate would not befall Grandfather's older brother George so she walked him from wherever they lived, down to Liverpool and put him on a ship to America. When my grandfather turned nine she did exactly the same thing.

Grandfather called me 'Bubsy Anne' and he would say 'Bubsy Anne, she had a shilling and we walked all the way and it took over a week and then we slept on the wharf until a captain would take me.'

It is believed that eventually he was accepted aboard the *Chichester*, which was a training ship for destitute boys. He told me that he went to Africa and India and a lot of interesting places. It is known that in June 1873 he was presented with a watch for being the best cabin boy because this watch is still in the family.



The Chichester Training Ship for poor boys, stationed in the Thames.

He told me he was excited to be coming here because he'd heard that the streets of Australia were lined with gold. When the ship docked in Sydney, they were given eight hours shore leave during unloading and he made the decision to just jump ship. He said he walked off, and on the dock there was a Cobb and Co coach and he went up and he said to the fellow, 'How far can you take me?' He said, 'I can't take you far but go and see that bloke' That bloke said 'I can take you up to Brisbane'.

Brisbane meant nothing to him but he said, 'OK'. On the way up he learnt he could go further, to this young settlement called Rockhampton and then once there, he went on to Copperfield where he got a job alongside about 2000 people working the copper mine. He used to say 'Bubsy Anne, for at least the next 10 years, every time I saw a 'bobby' - if there was an open door I'd be through it or a bush, I'd be behind it' because if they had caught him he would have got '25 lashes with the cat-o-nine-tails and ten years in jail for desertion.' Thank goodness he never got caught.

He met my grandmother at Copperfield. She was 12 when she came out from England with her parents and they eventually ended up settling at Aramac.

Barney Mullins had a big boarding house in Copperfield and he had heard that this ship was coming in and he wanted girls to do the work in the boarding house. Because women were in very short supply, Barney Mullins came down to Rockhampton to try and get some of them to come and work for him and because she needed to find work, my great grandmother agreed to my grandmother going back with Barney Mullins on the Cobb and Co coach.

My grandfather told me that everyone knew Barney was going to come home with some girls and he said 'That night we knew the coach was coming in about nine o'clock at night and they had all the gas lights lit up and every one of us was there waiting to see these girls, and Barney arrived with only one girl,' my grandmother, Angelina Snell, aged 12. He said 'My mate dug me in

the ribs and said - I'll have her - and I said like hell you will, she's mine' and she was. They eventually got married in the registrar's office at Aramac on 14 October 1878 when Grandmother was around 22.

Grandmother was the oldest child with one brother and one sister. Her mother remarried a man called Hocking. It was because she was the oldest child that she was expected to find a job and that's why her mother put her on the coach. She later told me that she cried every night of her life for a very long time.

Masters was my maiden name. My father George Masters was a sniper in the First World War. He served with Billy Sing who became famous and they both came from this little tiny settlement called Bathampton,

five miles from Clermont. When my father was ten years old, he had to go and help his father drive. His father had an accident off a horse and got killed, so he stayed on and got a job on a station as a station hand and in 1914 he was one of the first to come in and enlist. He and my mother, May Stagg both lived at Bathampton in their young days so they sort of knew each other. She wrote to him during the war years. My mother worked out on cattle stations around Clermont.

While he was sniping in France, he was injured when a German bullet ricochet and split his head open. They thought he was dead until it became dark and they could drag him back. He went to a hospital in Paris where he had 29 stitches and a gold plate inserted in his head and he was sent back home. That's when he and my mother married and I was born the next year.

He was barely educated and couldn't write his name. Mother taught him a bit over the years, but you never saw him reading. He was a wonderful shot, so to earn a living, he went kangaroo shooting and Mother went with him and up until the age of ten, when Father got a job at a sawmill, I was reared by my maternal grandparents who lived in Clermont.

Although I was an Anglican, my family got permission from the priest for me to attend the convent because Granny was crippled and couldn't get me to the State School which was another one and a half miles further away than the convent. You have to remember that I grew up in the days when there were no cars. I was around 12 before I saw my first car. They were the days when it was normal to see wagons pulled by 12 or 14 or 16 horses or cattle.

I went to the convent from six to ten years old and I fell in love with it. Because I was an Anglican, they tried hard to get me to convert and on my net at home I had pictures and I had medals and my grandmother would say 'I don't know what your mother is going to say'. My grandmother was herself a very strict Methodist – one of those who wouldn't spell plums because it had a 'P' in it and that would be swearing!

When Mum and Dad had around 4-500 skins, they would come back in to town and sell them, stay a couple of days and then take off again and I was really anxious that Mum would make me get rid of my beautiful pictures and catechism and everything but she came back in and to my delight, didn't say a thing.

There was no electricity then of course and you would have your tea early at about five o'clock or so and most people were in bed by 7.30 pm. As there were no young people around where we lived, after tea my grandfather and I would sit out on the back steps and he would tell me all these wonderful stories. He had learned to read on board ship and he became a very avid reader. He bought me my first books and I can even remember the titles of some – *What Katie Did*, *What Katie Did Next* and *The Seven Little Australians*. He built me a little shelf at the head of my bed to keep my books and I have him to thank for my love of reading.

My parents added three brothers and two sisters to our family and eventually my father got a job in a government sawmill called Berimgan and they settled at Berimgan where a provisional school was built and I transferred there at age ten. When you got up to Class Six, you then sat for scholarship and we had to come into Clermont for the exam. My teacher at that time was Mr Caddy who used to play the violin and who rode his motorbike out from Blair Athol where he lived, four miles away.

I was one of ten who passed the scholarship exam, but as the next step would have been sending me to Rockhampton for further education, no one could afford to do it. There was no government help for people or families of any kind for anything then. My father was earning £2/2/6 a week with a family to support, so going to high school was just out of the question. I was really disappointed as my greatest pleasure was school, but I accepted what had to be. I couldn't get a job for a while so I went back to this one teacher school and helped the teacher there, Billy Dalton. He'd set the lesson and I looked after the preppies. I'd have loved to have been a schoolteacher.

Eventually, my grandfather found me a job in Clermont at the home of Beau Griffin where he was employed as a gardener and that's where I stayed working as a housemaid until I married. The Griffin's were the elite of Clermont. They had a big shop and were very wealthy. Mrs Eaton was the housekeeper and she taught me how to cook and how to look after a house and how to wait on tables. Every Saturday night they'd have guests for dinner. It was a seven-day a week job and I don't recall taking holidays. I was paid 5/- a week to begin and about 6 months later was given a raise of 2/6. Saturday was payday and every Saturday morning my mother was on the doorstep and I had to give her 2/6 of my wages. It was depression time and you really only understand what that means if you've lived through one. Nobody had anything and everybody helped everyone else out. It was a hard time but it was a caring time.

Dances at the weekend, the open air pictures and playing tennis were the major form of entertainment as you grew up and I met my husband Jack at a dance in Clermont.

You've no idea what I used to do with those dirty pots and dishes on a Saturday night at the Griffin house. I'd hide them in cupboards and wash them the next day, just to get to the dance as early as I could.

Jack was an Anglican and that was very important as the religious lines were quite severely drawn in those days. I recall that when I was young, there was a family who had seven children in Clermont and the mother was Anglican and the father Catholic. As the children were born, one became a Catholic and one became an Anglican and, would you believe, as they grew and married, each of them married someone from the opposite denomination. 'Mixed marriages' were frowned upon and brought a modicum of shame to the families concerned. Priests insisted that mixed marriage ceremonies could not be held in front of the altar and if there were Protestant guests at a Catholic wedding, they had to remain outside the church for the duration of the ceremony. It really was terrible and almost caused divisions in the town as one persuasion didn't really mix with the other. That's why it was quite unusual for me to attend the Catholic Convent.

One sad result of this division was when one of the Catholic priests who, like most of the priests in those days had come from Ireland, had his nephew come out to stay for six months. This lad was 19. The Anglican

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Minister at the time had a number of children and one of his daughters got to know this Catholic lad. Jack and I were at the old open-air pictures one night when the daughter came in and sat two seats down from us and after the lights went out, the boy came in and sat with her. I think that all Clermont knew there was a special friendship except for the priest. When he got to hear of it, he had that boy back to Ireland within a week.

The old picture show held about 200 people I think. They had the old canvas chair area which cost you 1/- and then there was the 'hens roost', which was made of wood and up higher at the back. You took your own cushion and just sat on the ground there but it only cost 6d.

Jack and I married in 1935 and we had a wonderful happy marriage, producing three sons, Ted who became a teacher, Ray who became a minister of religion and Bob who became an electrician.



Jack, Bob, Ted, Ray and Annie.

At the time they were ready for secondary schooling, I was determined my children would have the opportunities I missed out on. Jack's family had not felt the depression as mine had because they had their own blacksmith shop, so Jack had been able to attend the Grammar School in Rockhampton. He wanted his boys to follow in his footsteps. At that time though, he was working at Griffin and Co earning £7/2/6 a week and it was going to cost us at least double that to send the boys to the Grammar. So Jack said, 'We've got all this land, how about we have a market garden to earn more money.' We both loved gardening so on this land, we put 600 laying hens and a market garden. It was very hard work and you got up with the crows and went to bed with the owls but it was worth it because it paid our boys way through secondary school.

There were just the two of us and we collected, cleaned and packed the eggs daily and then twice a week, we'd be up til midnight bunching up carrots, turnips and beetroots or whatever was in season for Jack to take all

round Clermont to sell from his cart. Once we had about 2000 cabbage seedlings planted out and we got up the next morning and there wasn't one left. We sent to Reids in Rockhampton for more and planted them again. Shortly after, we were coming home from the pictures and as we turned in, the headlights caught about 100 ducks rising from the paddock. We were in the middle of a drought and they'd decided Barraclough's was the place for a good feed.

Then we had a mouse plague. We planted rows and rows of watermelon seed and they didn't come up. We had to re-plant again. The crop from this second planting caused us problems because at that time there was this ridiculous 'old wives tale' that after Xmas, watermelons became poisonous. Because of the mice, our second crop was late and not ripe before Xmas. It didn't matter how much we assured people that we ate them and were still OK, no one wanted them.

We had about 2000 watermelons that we couldn't shift. My brother had some pigs and they were reared on a diet of watermelons for quite some time that year. Thank goodness that stupid tale slowly disappeared.

In the middle of all of this, I contracted TB and ended up at Westwood in the sanatorium. I was one of the lucky ones and only had to stay there for about eight months, thanks in part to the fact that they had just begun to use streptomycin, although they were still experimenting with dosages then and I believe that I got perforated ear drums from overdoses of this drug.

Jack became a cost clerk at Clermont and went on to be the Shire Clerk in 1950 and was only there for two months when he was offered the job of Shire

Clerk at Ilfracombe, 17 miles from Longreach and we went out there for 12 years. It was a big wrench and I cried when we went out, but after fitting right in and joining many organisations, I cried when we left too.

We ended up at Moranbah with three large shops selling furniture and electrical goods and a shop selling children's, men's, and ladies' wear, materials and you name it, I had it. We worked in conjunction with our son Bob. I must admit I felt really restricted over the ten years we were there because I couldn't get out to play golf.

We retired into Rockhampton in 1980 and before Jack passed away a couple of years ago, we travelled all over Australia and stopped wherever there was a golf club. I'm very happy in Rockhampton, it was a town I knew well from regular holidays and visits when the boys were at school, but my heart belongs to Clermont. It has all my early recollections and connections and although I've had a wonderful and varied life, Clermont will always be the place I really think of as home.

To Reside Among Us

By the Honourable Alan Demack AO (The Tenth Central Judge)

In 1871, six hundred inhabitants of the town and District of Rockhampton signed a petition directed to the Speaker and the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland asking to have a branch of the Supreme Court of Queensland established in Rockhampton, and that 'a Judge of the Supreme Court of Queensland...come to reside among us'.

That prayer was answered in 1896 when Mr Justice Virgil Power was appointed as the first Judge to reside in Rockhampton. He was given the title 'Central Judge'. From 1896 to 1978 eight other men were appointed as Central Judges. I was appointed as the tenth Central Judge in January 1978. So on 17 January 1978, my wife and my family set out with me from Brisbane to reside in Rockhampton.

What did the inhabitants of the Central District receive in their tenth Central Judge? The surnames of my paternal great-grandparents were Demack and Metcalf. On my mother's side, they were Zanow and Weier. The Demacks came to Queensland from Somerset in 1862. The Metcalfs came to Queensland from Durham County in 1876. The Zanows came to Queensland from Prussia in 1863 and the Weiers came to Queensland from Prussia in 1877. The timing of the arrivals meant that both my grandfathers were born in Queensland and each of my grandmothers came to Queensland as a child.

The Zanows settled at Caboolture in 1869 and my father and mother met at Caboolture when my father came there to practise dentistry. They married in December 1933. In April 1934 he was diagnosed with Bright's disease. He died in August 1934 and I was born six weeks later.

My mother returned to live with her parents. She did not remarry, so I grew up in my Zanow grandparents' home. Until quite recently there has not been a great deal of discussion in Australia about German migration. My grandfather was still at primary school when Queensland became concerned about German expansion in the islands to our north. The Queensland Government attempted to annex Papua to protect the Torres Strait trade route. This caused consternation in London and led to the British Imperial Government laying claim to Papua.

Against this background, my grandfather became resolutely Australian. He completed an apprenticeship as a wheelwright. He opened a business in Caboolture and extended it to include a sawmill. He became a Justice of the Peace. He served on the Caboolture Shire Council for three terms, once as Chairman. He was a member of a small committee which



established the Caboolture Centre of the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade. He served for a time as President of the Show Society, and of the Caboolture Chamber of Commerce.

All of this public spirited activity encouraged me to think about the social structures which sustain community life. When I spoke of studying law, my grandfather did not encourage me. He took me to see the family solicitor, whose advice was 'Don't'. An uncle told me that, if I wanted to study law, I should do so.

I completed my law degree in 1957, and commenced practising as a barrister in 1958. That was a time when the relationship between the State Government and the legal profession was at a low ebb, and the Bar was not an attractive profession to enter. I was the only person to commence practice as a barrister in Queensland in 1958. That did not concern me, because I wanted to be an advocate, and I had no high expectation.

Fortunately, after fourteen years' practice, I was offered an appointment to the District Court as one of the Brisbane Judges. Over the next three and a half years I sat as a Judge in Brisbane, and in a number of towns and cities in Queensland. However, I managed to spend only a morning in court in Rockhampton. I also chaired two Commissions of Inquiry appointed by the Queensland Government, one into the Status of Women in Queensland, and one into the Nature and Extent of

the Problems Confronting Youth. Each Commission visited Rockhampton and early one morning on one of those visits I walked to the Botanical Gardens and saw the grove of kauri pines for the first time. Many trees have been added since then, but my first view made a lasting impression.

I had also visited Rockhampton in the years from 1973 to 1975 in my capacity as Chairman of the Queensland Marriage Guidance Council. After the Family Court was established I was appointed as the first Family Court Judge in Queensland. It was a happy experience to be part of the process of establishing a new Court. For our first visit to Rockhampton, the Court sat in the Mayoress's Reception Room in the City Hall.

It had been the hope of those who founded the Family Court that it would be an informal court. In the Mayoress's Reception Room, informality did not have to be planned. All of the relevant Court files and documents were brought from Brisbane in a big brown Globite port. There was no court registry in Rockhampton. The 'bench' was a table at one end of the room and the room was filled with people awkwardly perched on Austrian bent chairs.

In 1978, the Central Judge presided at the sittings of the Supreme Court in Rockhampton, and at the sittings of Circuit Courts in Maryborough, Bundaberg, Mackay and Longreach. In Rockhampton there were four criminal sittings each year, at which the more serious criminal charges heard by a Judge and jury were tried. Each sitting was for a fortnight. In addition, about twelve weeks or more were allocated for hearing civil cases. Maryborough, Bundaberg and Mackay were each visited three times a year, for a total period of about four or five weeks in each town. Two sittings, each of one week, were appointed each year for the Longreach Circuit Court. It was unusual to have to travel out to Longreach, as there was generally no business for the Court. The two weeks were generally used for hearing civil cases in Rockhampton.

Most of the Central Judges travelled to circuit towns by train. In the post-war period, air travel became a possibility, but it was often difficult to find flights that fitted into the pattern of circuit work. Long before the days of the Tilt Train, I remember flying to Bundaberg for one sittings of the Circuit Court when the relevant flights from Bundaberg to Rockhampton occurred on Tuesday morning and Wednesday evening. The court work was completed shortly after the Tuesday flight departed. Rather than wait till Wednesday afternoon, I hired a car and arrived back in Rockhampton more than twenty-four hours earlier than if I had waited for the plane.

As a result, I usually travelled by car to the circuit towns. The one exception to this was during the 1980s when both TAA and Ansett were operating a jet service, which flew Brisbane-Rockhampton-Mackay. This meant that it was always possible to obtain a seat for the Mackay-Rockhampton leg, even on the shortest notice.

Apart from court work in Rockhampton and in the circuit towns, I travelled to Brisbane once a year to sit as

one of a bench of three judges hearing appeals. Initially this court was called either the Court of Criminal Appeal or the Full Court. In 1991 the Court of Appeal was instituted, and it heard both criminal appeals and general appeals. From that time the Judges of the Supreme Court were designated as either Appeal Court Judges or Trial Judges. Previously the Full Court and the Court of Criminal Appeal consisted of three judges of the Supreme Court assigned to a three week sittings according to an annual calendar. With the inauguration of the Court of Appeal, the bench of three judges usually consisted of two Court of Appeal Judges and one Trial Judge.

Sitting as part of a bench of Judges hearing appeals was a significant part of my year's work. Many of the appeals raised issues of law or practice, which were the subject of contemporary debate. It was always helpful to hear the submissions of a number of advocates on the same or similar issues, and then to discuss those submissions with two colleagues.

Most of my twenty-two years as Central Judge was spent in the old Court House, which is now part of Central Queensland University. That building was completed in 1887 at a cost of £12 533. The cost was vigorously debated in Parliament in spite of the assertion that it would meet the needs of Rockhampton for thirty years or more.

There have been both internal and external changes to the building since 1887. The most significant changes have concerned the stairways that were originally provided. At present there is one stairway which is entered from the door on the right of the East Street façade. Originally there was also a stairway which was entered from the door on the left of the East Street façade. Jurors used the left hand stairway, and witnesses and public used the right hand stairway. The Judge and court staff used the existing stairway at the Bolsover Street end of the building. There was a stairway into the Courtroom from the cell (now a strongroom) in the room on the right of the passage leading from East Street. That was for the accused persons and their escort. The fifth stairway came from the Fitzroy Street side of the building through what is still called the Bar Robing Room. This stairway was used by the lawyers.

When the Courthouse was first used, the sitting of the Courts attracted significant crowds of people, and these five stairways allowed people to gain access to the Courtroom in an orderly way.

The Courtroom now has a false ceiling. It originally had a stained pine ceiling which followed the pitch of the roof. There was a large gas light and a sounding board over the witness box.

One afternoon, during a storm, I could smell an electrical fire apparently above the false ceiling. When this was traced, it was discovered that water had caused a short in one of the fluorescent lights. More significantly, termites were found in most of the wooden ceiling. The wooden ceiling was removed, leaving a large empty space between the iron roof and the false ceiling. This

meant that the air-conditioning had to work very hard in summer – a reminder of the fortitude of those who wore robes and wigs in the long summer days before air-conditioning became a necessity of life.

In 1978, the Supreme Court heard all of the serious criminal cases where the maximum sentence that could be imposed was life. This covered a range of offences including murder, manslaughter, rape, robbery, burglary, piracy, treason and serious drug offences. The District Court heard the other criminal cases which involved trial by jury. Changes were made in the early 1990s, so that the Supreme Court dealt with only murder, manslaughter and serious drug offences.

Most of the homicide cases (murder and manslaughter) involved a domestic dispute. Many had a fortuitous aspect, in the sense that death would not have happened but for an event to which the victim and the perpetrator gave no attention. For example, in one case a couple had spent a hot day arguing about the accommodation in which they lived. The man threatened to shoot the woman, and fired a .22 rifle at her upper chest. The bullet merely oozed a little blood. The couple began to talk, not knowing that she was slowly bleeding internally. Neither sought help, and continued to talk and, as the woman became light headed, to laugh, until she lost consciousness and died. A tragic, rather stupid waste of life.

Some other murders were particularly vicious and carefully planned, including ones which arose from a domestic relationship which had soured. Because homicides occur in such varied circumstances, it is good that we have parole boards to determine the time at which a perpetrator can be released from prison.

The majority of the civil cases I heard involved personal injuries caused generally in a motor vehicle accident or at work. In twenty-two years I heard only one case involving the allegation of medical negligence. The longest civil cases I heard involved, in one instance, the allegation that a veterinary surgeon had negligently treated a race horse, and, in the other, the allegation that a firm of accountants had given negligent financial advice to three medical practitioners.

The difficulty a lawyer has talking about the cases in which he or she is involved is that often the cases of most interest to a lawyer fail to quicken the pulse of the reader or listener. For example, when I was studying law, one subject was the law of succession, the study of what happens to a person's property after they die. During the nineteenth century, the English propertied classes made long and explicit last wills and testaments which distributed the deceased's assets down to the last teaspoon. What was to be done if the assets had changed in nature and in value between the date of the will and the date of death? Over a number of years, the courts devised rules to deal with this, and I patiently learned those rules as a student. I was not asked to use that knowledge as a barrister, but on one occasion in Rockhampton I was thrilled to hear a case involving those rules. The case may well have excited no one else, least of all those beneficiaries who did not receive what

the deceased had hoped to give them.

It is a privilege to work in a profession which feeds on history, and a particular privilege to work in a courthouse which has been a theatre for history. I tried to share this privilege with both the legal profession and the citizens of Rockhampton on a few occasions. Two of these celebrations were of particular significance.

In 1991, in conjunction with the University College of Central Queensland (as Central Queensland University was then known), we celebrated the centenary of the Shearers' Trial in the courtroom where the trial took place. The Capricornia Players, drama students from the UCCQ, performed what were called 'satiric scenes recreating the mood of 1891'. Professor David Myers read a speech by the Hon William Allen in 1891 from Parliamentary Debates. Professor Geoffrey Bolton delivered the Centennial Commemorative Lecture: 'The 1891 Shearer's: Railroaded?' A week later I read a paper to a meeting of the Capricornia Collection Society, held in the Courtroom which was a commentary on the trial of the shearers. The lectures and other papers were published by CQU Press.

In 1996, a display of documents and artifacts was arranged in the Rockhampton Art Gallery to celebrate the centenary of the arrival in Rockhampton of the first Central Judge, Mr Justice Virgil Power. It was a particular delight for me that two years later the new court complex was opened and given the name 'Virgil Power Building'.

Before 1978, the old Courthouse had become too small to accommodate both the resident Supreme and District Court Judges. Eventually the former Public Curator offices were converted into a District Court. While this provided space for the courtrooms, court staff, lawyers and judges, there were serious inadequacies. There was no convenient place for the members of the jury panel to assemble. The old trees provided shade from the sun, but no shelter from the rain. There was no security in any of the courtrooms, and bringing accused persons from the watchhouse unnecessarily used up police resources.

Eventually the Queensland Government agreed to build a new court complex. The Virgil Power Building embodies excellent contemporary court design, and is in keeping with the design of the older buildings which have served the courts. The panelling and fixed furniture in the courtrooms is hoop pine. This recalls the panelling in the old courtroom, except that the hoop pine walls in the old courtroom had been stained reddish brown. As a tribute to Rockhampton, the design in the royal blue carpets contains the colours in the bauhinia flower which was at the time the floral emblem of Rockhampton.

There have been many changes in the way the Courts have conducted their business since I began practising as a barrister in 1958. The technology for recording evidence has improved very greatly. The use of expert witnesses in most cases has added to the complexity of trials, but hopefully increased the possibility that the fact-finders, whether judges or magistrates or jurors, are

better placed to decide where the truth lies. Mediation in civil cases has greatly reduced the number of cases going to trial.

However, the most significant change has been the inclusion of women in jury panels. When I was a District Court Judge I presided over a criminal trial in Ipswich when for the first time in Queensland the twelve jurors sworn in for the trial were women. On one occasion in Rockhampton I had the unusual experience of seeing both a mother and her daughter sworn in on the jury. The jury selected the daughter as its foreperson. Both mother and daughter were members of the South Sea Island community.

A percentage of the women on any jury appear to have note taking skills, so that it is now common to see jurors making notes of the evidence. This was unusual in 1958. Women also appear to be more willing to discuss the evidence as the trial progresses. If a particular issue has

caught the jury's attention and the same issue is raised with another witness, women are more inclined to acknowledge the significance of this. In other words, having women on the jury has encouraged interaction among the jurors.

I do not believe women are any more or less compassionate than men when dealing with the serious issues a criminal trial raises. Rather they add to the combined wisdom and common sense of the jury understanding and insight that are not part of male experience.

When I was appointed as Central Judge in 1978, the expectation was that after five or so years I would be appointed back to Brisbane. Rockhampton's grace and charm, and its living history, captivated us, so that when I retired in May 2000, Dorothy and I decided to continue to enjoy the privilege of residing among the citizens of Rockhampton.



Rockhampton former Supreme Court building

I Still Like to Work

*By Eileen Mary Shotker
Edited from an oral tape.*

My mother's parents had not known each other before immigrating to Australia from Ireland on the same boat. Both families settled in Mount Morgan where my grandfather gained work at the mine and my grandmother began work in one of the boarding houses. Grandfather used to ride past the boarding house on his way to work and wave to Grandmother and eventually they were married.

Their name was Fogarty, he was a very tall man and she was a little tiny thing. Years later they played a large part in my family because they helped my mother Mary to rear us as my father, Johnnie James, who was a carpenter by trade, went from one job to another and couldn't settle down.



My grandfather Fogarty

We were living at Baree near Mt Morgan when I was born on 29 November 1910. I had two brothers who are now deceased and my one sister lives in Brisbane.

We didn't have it easy and looking back, I think we only survived thanks to my grandparents; they were marvellous. As a kid I remember my father fooling around and singing songs. He used to blacken his face and go on the stage and call himself Digger Willie; everybody loved him but he was often away because of his work and my mother had a sad life. Despite this, Mum lived until she was 97 years old, by which time she was living with me in Rockhampton.

I did my primary schooling at Callinal North State School, which was out at Kirkall, near Mount Morgan, and then I spent two years at the Range College. On leaving there, I went to Emu Park to my grandparents and got a job helping an elderly lady and her son in a mixed business. From there I took employment back in Rockhampton with a Mr Morris who was the Manager of the ANZ Bank. I was employed as their housekeeper and cooked the meals and looked after the household because Mrs Morris had become very ill. Mr Morris and their son Charlie who was a solicitor, were very nice to me, employing me even though I didn't have much experience. They were wonderful people.



My parents Mary Fogarty and Johnnie James.

While I was working for the Morris family, a friend of mine took me into Shotkers Pharmacy and introduced me to Fred. After that we went on to the Palais Royal to a dance and when we got round there, I'm blown if he didn't turn up and ask me for a dance.



My wedding day with far right, Fred's sister and my three sisters.

From then on we saw quite a lot of each other and were eventually married in St Joseph's Cathedral on 2 September 1936. We built a house at 229A Denham Street opposite the Girls Grammar and lived there until 20 years ago when Fred passed away aged 73, from a cerebral haemorrhage.

In those early days there would be balls and dances to go to. Fred's sister Edna taught dancing round in Denham Street and I loved dancing. We used to go to the Wintergarden every Friday night to the pictures. It was a lovely place and I would be sad if it was pulled down as it has so many memories. The Palais Royal was opposite the Wintergarden and it was a dance hall and you'd go downstairs and have coffee.

Other socialising would be with our own friends visiting each other for afternoon tea or dinner and show time was always busy in town. We would always go to the show, especially when our children were small and we'd be all dressed up in new dress, new hat and new shoes that sometimes hurt so much you could hardly walk. You wouldn't miss the sideshows each year and at show time we'd look forward to George Sorleys and Martins Follies

and J C Williamsons. Some of them would pitch their tents just over the road where the library is now and they would put on a new show each year.

They were the days where fashion dictated that everybody wore frocks and high heels and stockings and gloves even if you were just shopping in town. Even as small children, we would be dressed up and carted off to Mass each Sunday morning by mother. You'd never see a girl in jeans in those days. I'd hate to own a frock shop now; you'd go broke because no one wears a frock now.

Fred began his business with a stake of £50 about four years before we met. He had done his training with Dolph Symons on an apprenticeship basis and



Eileen aged 25 and Fred aged 27 taken in 1935.

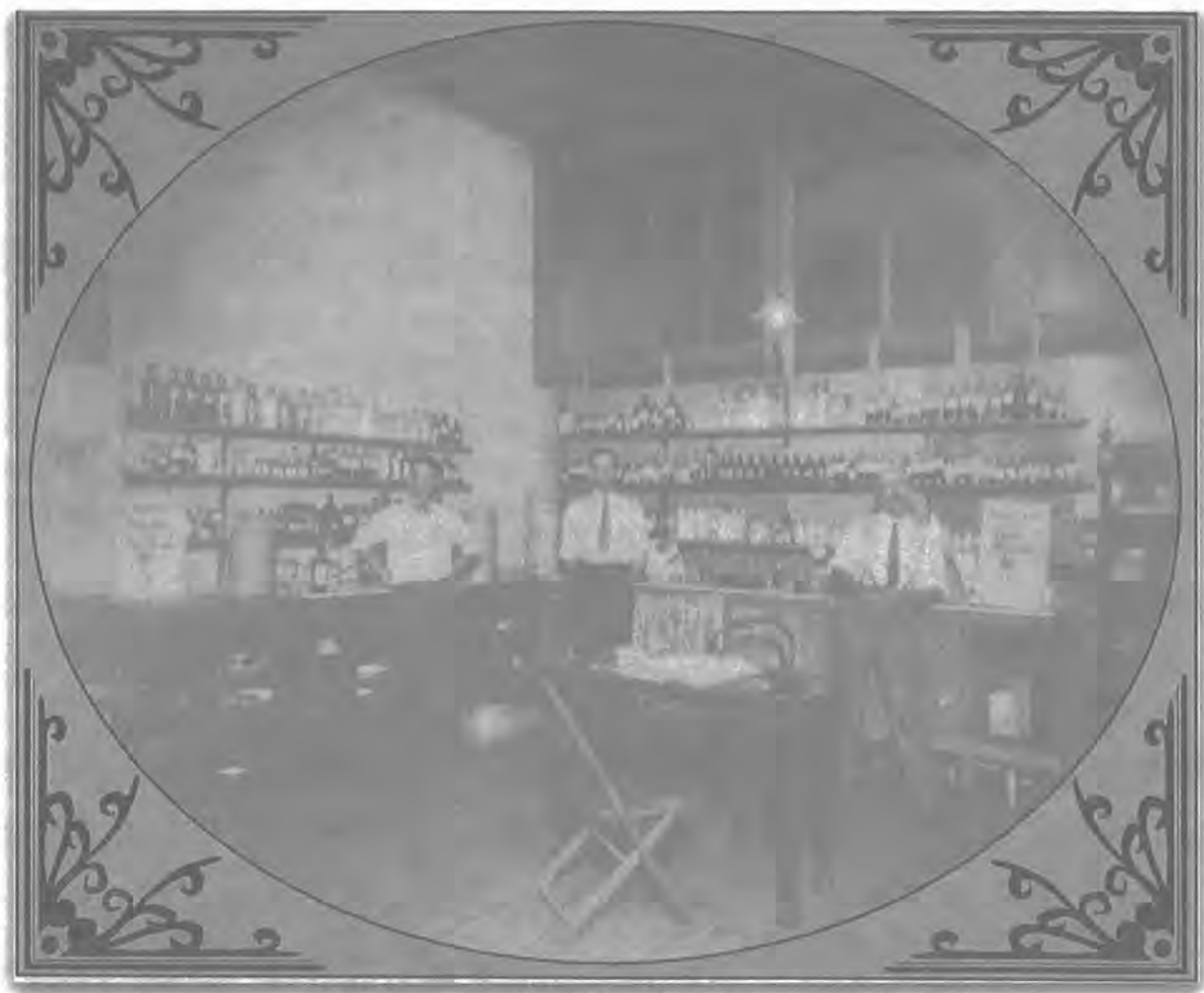


then I think in those days they went to Brisbane for the last year. I'm not positive of those details because they changed a number of times over the years.

Fred worked from around 8.30 in the morning and would still be delivering medicines at nine o'clock at night. He also worked a half day Saturday and a half day Sunday and Sunday night. It needs to be remembered that many doctors made house calls at night. Everybody was more accessible in those days. We worked closely with private practitioners such as Dr Talbot, Dr Leeds and Dr Wooster. The doctors would have evening surgery and they would ring up with a prescription for a patient and we would deliver it at night.



A montage of programs from the shows presented in Rockhampton over the years during carnival week.
From the collection of Charles Ward.



Shotker's Pharmacy 1935. l to r. Gordon (Fred's brother), Fred and Carl Shotker (Fred's father).

When our oldest daughter Judy was little, we used to catch the bus down and bring Fred some tea about 6 o'clock. Judy used to sit on the bench while Fred finished dispensing and if he had deliveries, we would go with him while he finished them off. We didn't own a car for quite a while after we married, Fred had a motorbike and I would ride pillion on it. When we did get a car it was only a second hand one. It was a lot of years before we could afford to purchase a new car.

Fred wouldn't turn anyone down even if they didn't have money. He was terribly good-hearted and there would be knocks on the door at all hours. His herbal remedies and patented medicines were very well known and he was well-liked and highly regarded by the whole community.

We had three children, Judy, Jan and a son who only lived for four days. Both Judy and Jan became pharmacists, Judy has retired now and Jan still manages the pharmacy in William Street. Both the girls attended the Range College and, as they grew older, I began to help in the shop. I have met some wonderful people there, many of whom have become friends. I've seen their children grow up and now I'm seeing their grandchildren come into the shop.

The city has changed over the years since then. In William Street, Gowers used to be over the road with fruit and vegetables and Oswald's had the newsagent, stationery and book shop just across the road. There has

always been a pub on the corner, it was very rowdy at one time but it's much quieter now. Adjacent shops were Bert Price's Casket Shop and Mac's Toyland.

The shop began during the depression years and worked through the large influx of Americans during WWII. While the Americans were here, the city always had a lot of people roaming around; it didn't matter what time of day or night.

We've had our share of excitement, in particular one incident when on a Saturday night we were going home and this chap met us on the footpath and he wanted to know if Fred could give him something – obviously looking for drugs. Fred said no and advised him how to get to the hospital and we never thought any more about it. The following Monday, I was standing in the dispensary and Fred was sitting down out in the shop. This same fellow walked in with a coat over his arm and said quietly 'This is a stick-up'.

I got such a fright I didn't say anything, just edged myself slowly out of the dispensary and out into the shop and said to Fred 'Come outside!' He said 'What for?' and I just said 'Come on, come on!' and when we got out, there was this young lad called Michael who used to work for us and we called him and he ran into the shop. At this, the fellow took fright and ran out. They caught him – he'd just been released from jail in Mackay the week before and he was after drugs. Once the girls were grown, Fred and I had some lovely holidays. Fred would

have loved to have visited Germany where his father had been a navy man before coming to Australia, but unfortunately he never made it. I moved to an independent unit at Bethany when Fred passed away and I have been very happy there. I still like to work and I come in to the shop every day including Saturdays. Although I am no longer able to get around well enough to serve, I help out by putting the Webster packs in their folders after the dispensing pharmacist has checked them. These packs are a wonderfully simple manner of safe dispensing and we do a great number of them for nursing homes and private patients. They are just one of the very many tremendous changes in the dispensary since it opened in 1935 and visitors to the shop appreciate looking at the antique items from former times that are displayed in a corner of the shop.

I have ten grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren and I'm very proud of every one of them. They are all doing well in their chosen fields and are working in a wide range of fields such as chiropractic, dentistry, IT, journalism, nursing, teaching and meteorology and electronics.

Excerpts from 'The Medical Telephone', a homeopathic booklet published in Hobart in 1883 give an insight into just how far medicine has come. This booklet is on display at Shotker's Pharmacy in William Street.

Mr & Mrs Fred and Eileen Shotker.



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Music, Music, Music

By Hope Davison

I was born in 1921. I'm told I moved around a bit in the first four years of my life. My grandparents Mr & Mrs Alfred DeLandelles had the store in Marlborough and my Uncle Angus was the manager of the post office. Because of family circumstances, my grandparents decided to sell the store and buy a house at Emu Park. So in 1925, they went to live at Emu Park and took me with them. We lived at 'Braemore' in Higson and Thomas Streets right up on the hill above Shelleys Beach.

Apparently I got so excited at seeing so much water that I promptly fell in and got all wet but from then on it seems I settled down and was contented. Looking back, it's amazing how Granny and Grandad put up with me after having reared a family of their own.

I couldn't go to school until I turned six in 1927, but Granny was very good, taking me to the beach as often as possible. I have such fond memories of my childhood with Granny and Grandad. I recall the hills were covered in prickly pear so I got quite a few thorns in my feet and legs and Granny would get them out with poultices of castor oil and flour and at night time we would watch Cape Capricorn and Sea Hill Lighthouses going on and off. It was a beautiful view from the front steps of the house; you could see the cargo boats going north and the islands and the sandhills to the south and all the islands along the northern coast to where North and South Keppel Islands are.

Granny was a true Scot so she soon got me off to Sunday School which I really loved and Sundays couldn't come quickly enough. Granny knew most of the choruses and songs we sang. She had done quite a lot of singing in Scotland before she came to Australia so I learnt all her old songs as well as the ones at Sunday School. There wasn't electric light or television and we only had a battery operated radio which Grandad kept to listen to all the news programs. It only had a 2-volt cell, which didn't last very long and much later, when I started schooling in Rockhampton, I had to regularly lug it up there on the train for re-charging. So at night Granny, Grandad and I would sit out on the front steps and sing. We had a piano and Granny was quite good on it and after I had been going to Sunday School for a while, I told her I would like to learn how to play. It was around 1930 when she arranged a teacher and I stayed with her for six months but, Granny thought I could do better at the Convent, so she sent me there. The teacher was a very big Sister of Mercy who was very cross-eyed. I didn't know if she was watching the music or me until I felt a 'bang'. I learnt for about a year and a half and although the Sister wanted me to continue, Granny and Grandad couldn't afford it, so Granny helped me after that.

As a youngster, my uncles from the bush who played the mouth organ well themselves, taught me how to play and even bought me my first one, which was quite small.

We used to have a lovely time when the family got together at Christmas with the piano and mouth organs and singing.

I enjoyed school and seemed to do quite well. The girls played the same games as the boys. I still have a bag of marbles, some of which I won. Hopscotch was also very popular, especially on the beach and we skipped a lot. I really enjoyed doing eurhythmics; I remember all the moves and the music – Frog Puddles – I have the music for it still.

We would come up



Granny and Grandad married in 1883, taken at Emu Park in 1943 on the occasion of their 60th Wedding Anniversary. The cake in the shape of an English Cottage, was made and iced by Hope.

to Rocky often to go to the library and do other shopping. Granny and Grandad would go to the School of Arts Library for books.

At that time, there used to be a four-wheel buggy near the old post office so Granny would always get the driver to give her a tour of town. The horse would be tethered to one of the trees outside the post office.

I remember Granny had an old four-wheel buggy called a Phaeton when she was in Marlborough, so when we visited Marlborough now and then Granny would go and see her friends. She would be well-dressed in a black dress, coat, gloves, stockings, shoes and hat with a big scarf to keep her hat on. All the ladies dressed like that in those days.

Grandad came from an old gold mining family in Victoria, so he was always keen to go fossicking when we visited Canoona and Glen Geddes in North Yaamba. It was stated in an article on *Early History: R'ton & District*, written by 'Historicus' for the *CQ Herald* on the 3 March 1949 that Grandad's father - Navigating Captain Alfonzo St Clair DeLandelles found good gold at Mt Wheeler on 21 June 1869. Capt E S Delandells reported having won (found) 19 oz of alluvial gold in four days 'in a gully leading to a flat within a stone's throw of Mt Wheeler'. This led to a lot of fossicking with good results, and it became the Garibaldi Rush. Grandad told us that during this time Mt Wheeler had quite a community with a Hotel, hospital and many houses.

During the school holidays we would go to Calliope Station to see my uncle and aunt. Uncle was the stud groom there and had to prepare the cattle for the shows. I even went to school there once for a little while. Most of the kids rode horses to school and those horses would often eat the kids school lunches.

I was born very left-handed and when I started school, it was only natural I should write left handed. I did this for a whole year or more until a new teacher arrived. She said I had to write with my right hand and tied my left hand behind my back! Granny was very upset. I'm happy to say they aren't allowed to do that now. I was about 12 when I asked Granny to teach me the hairpin crochet she did and although she tried, she couldn't because I was left-handed. I was determined, so I found a little doily and copied the pattern myself. Now, all the time I'm doing anything with my right hand, I can almost hear my left

hand saying - please use me.

I remember the day I turned 12 very well. Granny said, 'Hope, now you are 12 you have to learn to cook, sew and do lots of things because a man doesn't want an ornament.' I really didn't understand what she was talking about but I soon understood how much work there was to do!

I made my first dress when I was 12. We had an old hand driven Singer Sewing Machine and then Grandad put a treadle on it for me. I really enjoyed sewing in between helping with the household chores and helping Grandad in his garden. All the washing up water was put on the plants in his vegetable garden.

It was 1935/6 when the government brought in a scheme where country students could attend the Rockhampton Technical College one day a week to learn cooking, dressmaking and laundry. (These were the days of beautiful old starched linen tablecloths and plenty of matching serviettes which needed ironing.) I think we had to be in Year Six or Seven at school and girls from all over CQ attended. I felt very lucky to be chosen to attend. I had to come up from Emu Park by train and if



Captain of 1st Emu Park Girl Guide Co. taken at Cenotaph, Anzac Day 1940

it was a cooking day, I had to bring all the ingredients for whatever was being made that day.

The first thing we had to do was sew a cap and apron from Madapolom (cotton) and we wore these from then on to do our work. On a cooking day, the teachers would buy our food for their (3 course) lunch for 1/6d. If there was enough, the students could have lunch for 6d.

In 1937 after a couple of years of this course, and having completed scholarship, I enrolled at the Tech College in the Sub Junior Course studying shorthand, typing, book-keeping, English, maths, algebra, french, history and geography for one year and then changing to a full day commercial course for two years. I also studied dressmaking, cake icing and commercial art with this course. These were wonderful years and I don't think I will ever forget them even though they were long days because I had to leave home when I heard the train whistle blow at 6.40 am and not get home until after 7 pm after walking the 20 minutes or so from the station each night in the dark. The good thing was, I was able to get most of my homework done at college while waiting to go and catch the train.

Some of my friends at the Tech belonged to Guides and in 1939, after a call from the Commissioner at the time – a Mrs Baker, I started training to become Captain of the 1st Emu Park Guide Company. This meant spending most weekends in Rockhampton as well. I stayed with the Bakers Saturday night and returned home Sunday. I was invested in 1940 and my Company had seven Guides. The war had started so we had a lot to learn in a short time. We did a lot of training on the beach.

I had promised Granny I wouldn't go to work when my schooling finished and that I would stay home and look after she and Grandad because they had been so good to me, so being in Guides was wonderful. We used to go hiking a lot and I remember taking the girls to 'The Haven' to visit Mrs Wheeler. It was her home. The Australian soldiers had given it to her in recognition of

the work she did as a nurse, looking after soldiers during World War I. It is quite different now.

Granny and Grandad were very patriotic people who contributed to the war effort. Granny made lots of socks, mittens and balaclavas. We were given cake tins, so I made a lot of fruit cakes. They had to be cooked in the tin then sewn into white unbleached calico covers and sent to the Red Cross. Grandad also made baskets and lots of other things which could be sold. I had to ride my bike out to Kinka where the good pandanus palm trees were growing and cut off the branches and fronds and tie them on to my carrier and then ride home. They were quite heavy and awkward and I was always glad to get home with my load. Grandad would then cut them the way he wanted so that he could weave them into baskets and sometimes Granny would line them. They were sent to the Patriotic Fund headquarters in Brisbane.

During the war years, a first aid group was formed at Emu Park and I joined. We did our training at the State School and the principal of the school was the instructor. In 1942 a VAD detachment was formed, with members joining from Yeppoon, Rockhampton and The Caves.

Mrs Roy Clift was the Commandant. I went to Yeppoon to do the required Home Nursing course at the hospital and then had a couple of trips to Brisbane to gain further knowledge. The first time, we went to Greenslopes Military Hospital and by this time some of our boys from 11th Field Ambulance and 42nd Australian Infantry Battalion had been invalided home. It was a real eye-opener and made us realise what our boys were going through.

During the war on Anzac Day, a service was always held at the Cenotaph. The Guides, VAD's and RSL members always attended.

In 1942/3 the first lot of Yanks arrived. There were about 40 000 camping between Rockhampton, Yeppoon and Emu Park. They really took over the town. They would buy everything they could see – watermelons, bananas, cakes etc. They had more pay than our boys with the Aussies getting 6/1d a day and the Yanks \$2. At this time our boys were eating Bully Beef, boiled rice and herrings – not in tomato sauce either.

In 1942 I received a call from an officer from VAOC (Volunteer Air Observers Corp) asking me if I would like to be an air 'spotter'. I'm not sure if it was my experience in Guides and VAD's or just because where we lived right up on the hill, made them choose me, but I was very pleased to accept. They gave me a good set of binoculars,



Hope on right with Voluntary Aid Detachment members, Anzac Day 1944.

a trip sheet book, pads and pencils etc. plus a book illustrating all the planes I might see or hear and I was set up with a direct phone line to the office of the VAOC.

I had to fill in a page each time I heard or saw a plane. I also had to learn the names of the planes, and work out the direction they were travelling in. It was a 24-hour job but very interesting. Among the aircraft sighted were Sunderland flying boats, Catalinas and Lancaster bombers. The Catalinas were the easiest to pick; they travelled very slowly and had a distinctive drone. All particulars would be entered on the Log Book slips which would then be relayed to the office of the VAOC,



Hope pictured with her Certificate of Appreciation

which was located above the old Police Station on the corner of Fitzroy and Denham Streets. From there they were relayed to the control tower at the airport. We weren't given any other details than that.

Just a few years ago, they found the wreckage of a Lockheed Hudson survey plane which had come down with seven crew on board somewhere near Shoalwater Bay in 1945. That was one of the planes I reported on and it appears that the sightings at Kalpowar, Emu Park (which was mine) and then Yeppoon were the last reports before it came down.

I was presented with a lovely badge and Certificate of Appreciation by the RAAF for my work. It reads 'As a record and in appreciation of patriotic response to the call of country by serving in the Volunteer Air Observers Corps.' And is signed by G Jones, Air Vice-Marshal Chief of Air Staff. A copy of it hangs in the Military Museum in Bolsover Street in Rockhampton.

It was about this time that the School of Arts Hall in Emu Park burnt down, which was really bad because the hall was used for dances and other functions so, in 1946 the RSL decided to hold a Queen Competition to raise funds to build a Memorial RSL Hall and I was chosen as the RSL Queen. They also had a Post Office Queen and a Progress Association Queen competition which I was involved in and we made a lot toward the new hall which was opened in 1949. The RSL then moved the Cenotaph from near the railway station up to the present site near the hall and the band rotunda.

In 1947 after a crash course in shorthand and typing at the Tech College in Brisbane, I took a clerical posting down there, but it was a different life in Brisbane and I only stayed six months before coming home. Granny made arrangements for me to have an interview here with Walter Reid and Co and I began working with them.

While in Brisbane I became friendly with a Cub Leader and this led me to train as a Cub Mistress back in Rockhampton. I was appointed to the 5th Cub Pack. It was much different from Guiding but having been a Guider was a bonus. I boarded in town during the week with the Cub Leader Wren Mackie and I would ride my bike down to HQ in Fitzroy Street on Monday nights.

I attended the Pan-Pacific Jamboree in Melbourne during Xmas and New Year 1948/49. It was very educational meeting Scouts, Guiders and Cub Leaders from all over the world while we saw a bit of Melbourne. Melbourne weather was a bit hard to handle at times! Thanks to my uncles good teaching, my

mouth organ got a lot of use at the Jamboree and also at various Scout and Guide camps over the years.

Just before the Jamboree I became friendly with Herb Davison, one of the Hardware staff at Reids. All was well until I came back, when I was told by the Manager it wasn't Company policy for the office staff to mix with the hardware staff. Herb wanted to leave, but he had been there since 1930 with the exception of four and a half years serving with the 42 RQR 11th Field Ambulance in New Guinea from 1942 – 1946, so I thought it better for me to leave. A co-worker was able to point me to a vacancy elsewhere and I went to see them and was given the position straight away.

Herb was a wonderful pianist. He loved to play classical music but would really 'go to town' playing jazz. He often told me about his time at Bauple (a town north of Maryborough) where 11th Field Ambulance trained in 1942 and, in a recent booklet produced for Bauple

Centenary celebrations, it says 'Wonderful dances were held in the Band Hall on Saturday nights during this period (war time camps). The fact that the troops had to dance in their army boots didn't make any difference. Herb Davison, a soldier from Rockhampton, would play the piano. *Twelfth Street Rag* and *In the Mood* were two of his favourite tunes.' How pleased Herb would have been to be remembered like that.

Before we were married Herb used to come down home for some weekends. He and Granny would have a wonderful time. She was a very good singer and Herb would play the piano for her to sing and now and again he would break into jazz. Granny would tell him he was 'daft', which was a very old Scotch saying of hers. He would also take her for drives in the car which she loved. These will always be fond memories.

Herb and I were married in 1951; I was still in Cubs and we had a Cub Guard of Honour outside St Andrews. We built our own home in Park Avenue and our daughter Pauline was born in February 1954 during the big flood and our son Jeffrey arrived in August 1956. The kids loved the beach and we spent as much time there as possible. Herb's health was getting a bit of a worry but he plodded on as long as he could.

Herb had to leave Reids in 1960 due to his deteriorating health with emphysema and asthma. He entered the chest clinic and was there for most of the year with special treatment. He worsened however and passed away in June 1963 and it was a big shock as he was only 48 years old. The children kept me going; Pauline learnt music and participated in the Eisteddfod each year. She went into Brownies and Guides and Jeff went into Cubs, then Scouts and then Cadets at High School. I enjoyed working with Pauline when she too became involved in raising funds for RSL in 1975 and I feel very proud and blessed with Pauline and Neil, Jeff and Debbie and four lovely grandchildren all doing well in their chosen fields.

I'm 83 now and I look back in surprise at all those years that have passed so quickly. I'm not as active now as I'd like to be but one of my main loves is still music. We have a small music group of which I am a member and I belong to the Chamber Music Group. I also belong to Trefoil Guides, Rockhampton Legacy, Scouters Fellowship, the Orchid Society in Rockhampton and play just a little indoor bowls and I visit Gracemere Gardens each month as a Blue Care Visitor. I still play my mouth organ.



Herb and Hope Davison all dressed up at the 1950 Rockhampton Show.

A Proud History

Edited from material supplied by Bryan Huth

The following story has been put together from material supplied by Alan Huth of Gladstone, son of Alexander Charles Huth and Bryan Huth, nephew of Alexander, both of whom have had a proud family association with the Australian South Sea Island people from Joskeleigh.

Alexander Charles Huth was born in 1901 and passed away in 1977. An original article he wrote titled *South Sea Islander Settlement, Joskeleigh, 1901 – 1920* has been the basis for many other articles written about the lives of a gentle race of people who were forced to come to this country and then, after they had chosen to stay, were forced to register as 'other' on census forms long after the 1967 referendum that recognised Aborigines as Australians. It would be July 2000 before the Queensland Government formally recognised Australian South Sea Islanders as a distinct cultural group who were acknowledged for their outstanding contribution to Queensland's development.

The 'blackbirding' era, where more than 60 000 people were 'recruited' from Melanesian islands, was between 1863 to around 1904. In fact a total of 62 561 workers were brought to Queensland aboard blackbirder ships in 807 recruitment voyages. Their muscles built the raw foundation of Australia's sugar industry and the men dumped at Rockhampton in 1893 worked sugar plantations around Yeppoon and lived on land nobody wanted that became Joskeleigh. The first South Sea Islanders in the area of Joskeleigh worked for a cane growing partnership of Bercliman and Lambert in the 1870s, on a selection of Balnagowan under the property name of Joskeleigh, derived from the name of a jackeroo – 'Joske.'

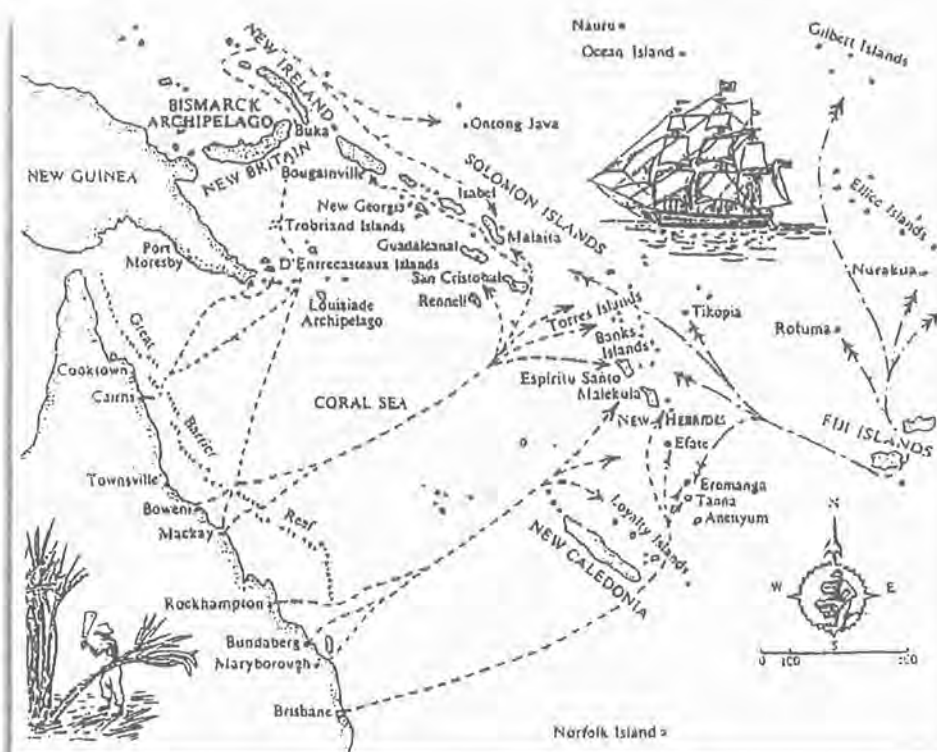
Central Queensland's infant sugar industry, centred around Farnborough sugar mill. It was experiencing labour problems in 1883. Europeans refused to 'hack' the work on wages of 30 shillings a week. Kanakas were paid only £6 a year in addition to meagre handouts. These handouts consisted of clothes and hats and tobacco and the food allowance was made up of meat, fish, vegetables, flour, salt and molasses. The first Islanders employed on Yeppoon Sugar Company's plantation came from the Solomon Islands in September 1883. Later they originated from New Hebrides islands of Ambrim, Tanna, Santo, Paama, Oba and others.

Old ships, long past cargo-carrying safety standards were chartered for the labour trade. Notable was Bobtail Nag, an old 170 ton brigantine that leaked like a sieve and was considered a death trap but was passed for labour trading. Dysentery and disease plagued the 'cargo' with many dying on the way. A survivor of an 1877 trip, recruited from the island of Aoba in the Banks Island Group, was Simon Baggow. His family line of descendants still live on the Capricorn Coast.

Historian, Dr Clive Moore has said however, that 'Their real problems stemmed not from the blackbirding days, but the years immediately after, when white Australia turned them from a labour force into fringe-dwellers.' Eleven months after Federation, legislation

was introduced that prohibited employment of Islanders and provided for their deportation after 1906. Exemptions were made for those who had lived in Australia for 20 years. Some went into hiding or travelled to a more receptive NSW. Then a 1919 Queensland industrial award denied them the right to work on white-owned farms and they were prevented from joining trade unions – the AWU preferred white members. Some merged with Aboriginal and TI communities while others stayed true to their people and 'little Joskeleighs' sprouted outside the sugar towns.

It is in the light of this history then, that Alexander Huth's recollections are so interesting :



My association with the South Sea Islander settlement at Joskeleigh goes back to 1901, the year I was born, until I left in 1920. My European parents lived there until about 1938 on a block of land bought from the Joskeleigh estate before the turn of the century. The South Sea Islanders were brought to the Sandhills – now known as Joskeleigh – to work for the Yeppoon Sugar Company, clearing land where it intended growing sugar cane. Mr Cuff an Englishman, was overseer.

After Federation, the White Australia Policy was enforced and black labour removed from the sugar industry, so many South Sea Islanders were repatriated. This caused some serious problems, as the people were not always returned to their home islands. The Sandhills Kanakas were around 40 years of age in 1906 when the Government decided that all who had been in Queensland for twenty years could stay if they wished. This was the ticket they attached so much importance to.

When black labour became illegal on the plantations, the company stopped the job and sold their land. Mr Cuff took over 100 acres, built his home there and opened a store. He rented two or three acres to the Islanders. They grew fruit, sweet potatoes and yams, both as a cash crop and to eat. Later, peanuts were also grown. Some collected mangrove bark under contract to Mr Jim Macaree for use in southern tanneries.

With the exception of Jim Youse and Charlie Brown, who had

larger areas of land and wood and galvanised iron houses, the Islanders lived in thatched huts. These were neat and weather proof. Roof and walls were made from a wide leaf grass we used to call blady grass. I could not find any there in 1975.

The houses were the same as they used to construct in the islands, with only one doorway and rarely a window. There was no provision for smoke to escape from the fire which burned most of the time on the earth floor. This was unhealthy and probably shortened their lives, but it kept the mosquitoes away.

By 1914 the Islander population at Joskeleigh was about 200, including children of the originals and newcomers from North Rockhampton and other places. The children of these people were around my age, and I went to primary school with them. The only school in the district was at Mt Barlow, about half a mile along the Coowonga Road from its junction with the Tungamull Road.

A school was later opened at Joskeleigh and the Mt Barlow School moved to Keppel Sands when the township began to develop. Although educated to the age of fourteen years, these Australian born children had great respect for their Islander parents and elders.

Between 1901 and 1914 Christianity was established among the original Islanders by three Gospel Hall missionaries named Mackay, Hyde and May. One or more of these gentlemen



The Joskeleigh State School. This building now forms part of the Joskeleigh Museum



Mr Oakman with his Gospel Van. He and my grandfather Alexander were both lay preachers and participated in the erection of the first church at Joskeleigh.

travelled the 26 miles from Rockhampton by bicycle each Sunday to preach and organise a church. With the assistance of Mr Cuff and my father, they built their Gospel Hall church. Some Islanders later preached and taught Sunday School.

Although they accepted Christianity they still retained some of their island customs. On the birth of a daughter, the child was promised to a man who had no wife. He did not buy her, but she was spoken for. However, the man usually was dead or too old to bother when the girl reached womanhood. The girl, having been educated in the State School, also had other ideas.

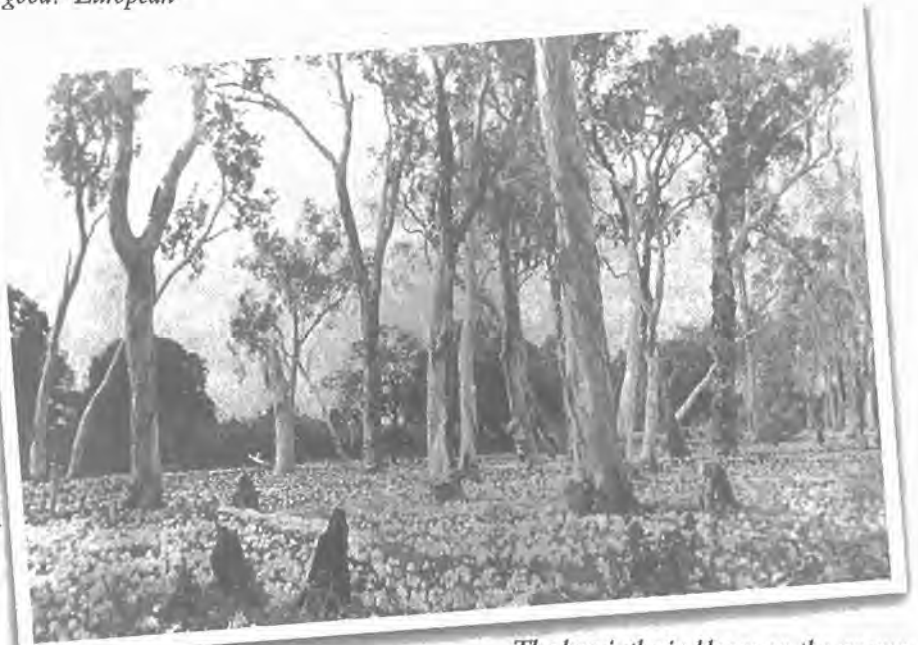
When an Islander died, a feast was held for the deceased 12 months later. There would be no moaning or grief, but everyone would have a good time. Pigs and fowls were cooked island style in the ground and eaten with mashed taro. They said the taro should be mixed with coconut milk, but as no coconuts grew there, lard was used instead. It tasted really good. European food was also served.

Up to about 1914, when an Islander died, the Emu Park policeman had to be sent for to give permission for burial. They could not afford to go to Rockhampton for medical treatment. White members of the Gospel Hall acted as undertaker and clergyman.

Alexander Huth was the eldest son of Alexander and Maryanne Huth, who were among the first settlers in the Sandhills (Joskeleigh) area. Maryanne was an amazing woman, who after contracting polio at the age of three did not let it alter her life. Although only able to move about on crutches, she milked cows and chipped peanuts and worked alongside her husband as well as any other. Her method of working in the fields was to get to the end of a row that needed attention, leave her crutches there, sit down and then pull herself the length of the row and back up the other side to her crutches. Alexander and Maryanne moved to Rockhampton in 1938 and chose to settle in Kanaka Town.

Mabel Edmund in her book 'No Regrets' tells how she and her husband Digger, did the reverse. Mabel was raised at the Flats, but moved to Joskeleigh with Digger when she was married. She says 'Huge paperbark trees grow along the banks of the swamps down home at Joskeleigh, many of them one hundred years old. Some of the big limbs are hollow and they make good places for the English and Italian bees to build their hives in. There are so many flowering trees in the area and the swamps are always filled with flowering hyacinth that it doesn't take long for the bees to fill their hives with honey.'

Also in Mabel's book, she tells of Mr Oakman's part in her wedding, the last wedding to be held in the little wooden church across the road from Joskeleigh school before it was pulled down and moved. She says –



The hyacinths in bloom on the swamp at Joskeleigh.



My grandparents Alexander and Mary-anne Huth with their family.

This photograph was taken in 1911.

Children from L to R.

Gladys, Reginald (seated on his father's knee).

My father Alexander Jnr (standing), Evelyn (in front of Alex) and Herman

'An old Belgian gentleman named Octavus Oakman was the preacher there, he also ran the post office and in earlier days before a school teacher came, he taught the boys school lessons and his wife taught the girls. A fine old fellow he was. He was unable to perform the marriage ceremony for us, as he did not have any credentials, so he made arrangements for a minister from the Salvation Army to come down and do it for him.'

After leaving from her brother George's home in Huth's Lane to cover the three miles there in a sulky polished up, with ribbons and bows everywhere...

'We were halfway there when I looked across Huth's paddock and I saw George running, he was taking a short cut to try to catch up to us. In all the excitement I had left my bouquet behind,'

'My dad walked me down the aisle. My husband-to-be was standing there, or I should say trying to stand there. He drank a bottle of rum that day to steady his nerves and he was drunk. Old Mr Oakman was getting upset, he didn't know what had happened to the minister. Billy Parter got on his horse and rode the six miles to Keppel Sands to ring him to see if he was still coming down. The minister told Billy that he and his family were on their way down before and they ran into a very bad storm at Sliepner Creek. His wife was frightened, so he took her all the way back to Rocky and he would be down as soon as he could. Everyone started singing hymns, we were just about ready to give up and go home and eat the wedding breakfast when the minister arrived, two hours late to perform the ceremony. Halfway through the ceremony the big storm reached Joskeleigh and the rain poured down out of the heavens. Mr Oakman said the Lord was sending His blessings on our marriage and I believe He did. We had thirty-five years together until the Lord took my husband home.'

Material from the Qld State Archives show that in 1913 the establishment of a School at Sand Hills was requested by Mr H Somerset Leeke who was Secretary to the Building Committee, Sand Hills State School. It was noted there were only a handful of white settlers in the area until Time Expired Ticket Men and Australian born Islanders moved in and that the predominant religion was Plymouth Brethren. The children of school age numbered 23 coloured and nine white and their parents were listed as T J O'Brien, AC Huth, W Parter, C Brown, W Warcon, Y Youse, Louie Leo, Coora, T W Warkill,

W Tattowe, J E Smith, J Dingwall and W Mackie.

One of the many arguments put up against the establishment of a school was that the Australian born Kanaka might not necessarily be a British subject and so unable to take up a position on a school committee.

Eventually however a school was registered as the Joskeleigh Provisional School and it was originally held in a local hall. Mr Leeke appealed to the Department for schoolroom type furniture and the amount of £25 for furniture and equipment was granted. It was stressed by the Department however, that this was not to be used to purchase pencils or erasers.

Frederick William Vesperman transferred from Pink Lily School and school started on 17 October 1913. Over the next few years the school remained in a precarious position and it took the local white parents to counteract a statement by the Department of Education Inspector of the time who said 'mixing of Kanakas with white children should be avoided'. In 1915 an open-air school building was erected at the cost of £182/1/-. This cost included the building, furnishings for the building and heavy blinds to keep the sand out.



Picnic at Keppel Sands (Maryanne is standing beside the tree, her crutches leaning at the front.)

The archives show that the school opened and closed a few times and on one occasion an appointed teacher refused to teach black children. It also shows that in 1934 there was an outbreak of Typhoid Fever in the home of some children who attended the school.

Joskeleigh School was renowned for its sporting prowess, art and cultural skills. King tides were greatly anticipated by the school children when Joskeleigh road across the salt pans was flooded – the school teacher living in Keppel Sands would be cut off and school would be cancelled.

In another article written by A C Huth and published in the *Morning Bulletin*, he tells how his father had

introduced peanut growing at Joskeleigh. He got some peanuts from a Chinese named Charlie Ghee who had a market garden nearby. They were large sweet nuts which formed on runners on the main stem. The sandy soil at Joskeleigh made it possible to dig them up by hand, but it was slow work getting the nuts. The yield per acre was high and the price good. Soon everyone was growing them, including the South Sea Islanders.

He also talks about the local Chinese saying – ‘Most were well past middle age. I don’t remember seeing Chinese women. It was the time of the White Australia Policy and sayings like ‘Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves, No more Chinamen in New South Wales’ were not uncommon.’ He found the Chinese good and generous people, completely trustworthy and good citizens and recalls one in particular – Dan Hawke. He kept the Halfway House and wine saloon at Tungamull. ‘He was an old man in 1916 with a long wispy beard. He was considered



Cliff Warkill with his grandfather's war club

being scared as a child to go to the old men’s grass huts because they had black magic stones in bags outside. ‘We just stayed away’ he said, ‘We never knew anything about the old days. The old Kanaka blokes used to say the island ways were over and we had to forget.’

They may have known little of their ancestor’s early Melanesian life, but as Australian South Sea Islanders, they have forged their own proud history in Central Queensland.



Mr and Mrs Oakman beside their home which was also the Joskeleigh Post Office. At the back to the left is the Joskeleigh State School.

cranky and would stand no nonsense, but was at heart, a kindly old man.’

The Joskeleigh families, descendants of some of the original ‘guest workers’ as they were called, have stayed together and prospered and their names and others such as Malamoo, Backo, Wovat, Harold, Roberts, Vea Vea, Willie, Yow Yeh and Mann are still well known and respected throughout the Central Queensland community.

One of them Cliff Warkill, now in his 70s and a former Department of Main Roads foreman, was one year old when his father Thomas, an Ambrym man, died at Joskeleigh. He has his grandfather’s war club and recalls

Material for this article has been taken from:

- *Two original stories by Alexander Huth,*
- *An article written by Brian Dory and published in The Rockhampton Morning Bulletin dated 20.3.93,*
- *An article written by Damien Murphy and published in The Bulletin magazine dated 10.8.93,*
- *Sandhills provisional school/Joskeleigh State School taken from the Queensland State Archives. By Toni Philipoom*
- *The Queensland Government Action Plan for the Australian South Sea Islander Community.*
- *No Regrets. A book by Mabel Edmund, published by the University of Queensland Press*
- *Historical photographs from the collection of Brian Huth.*

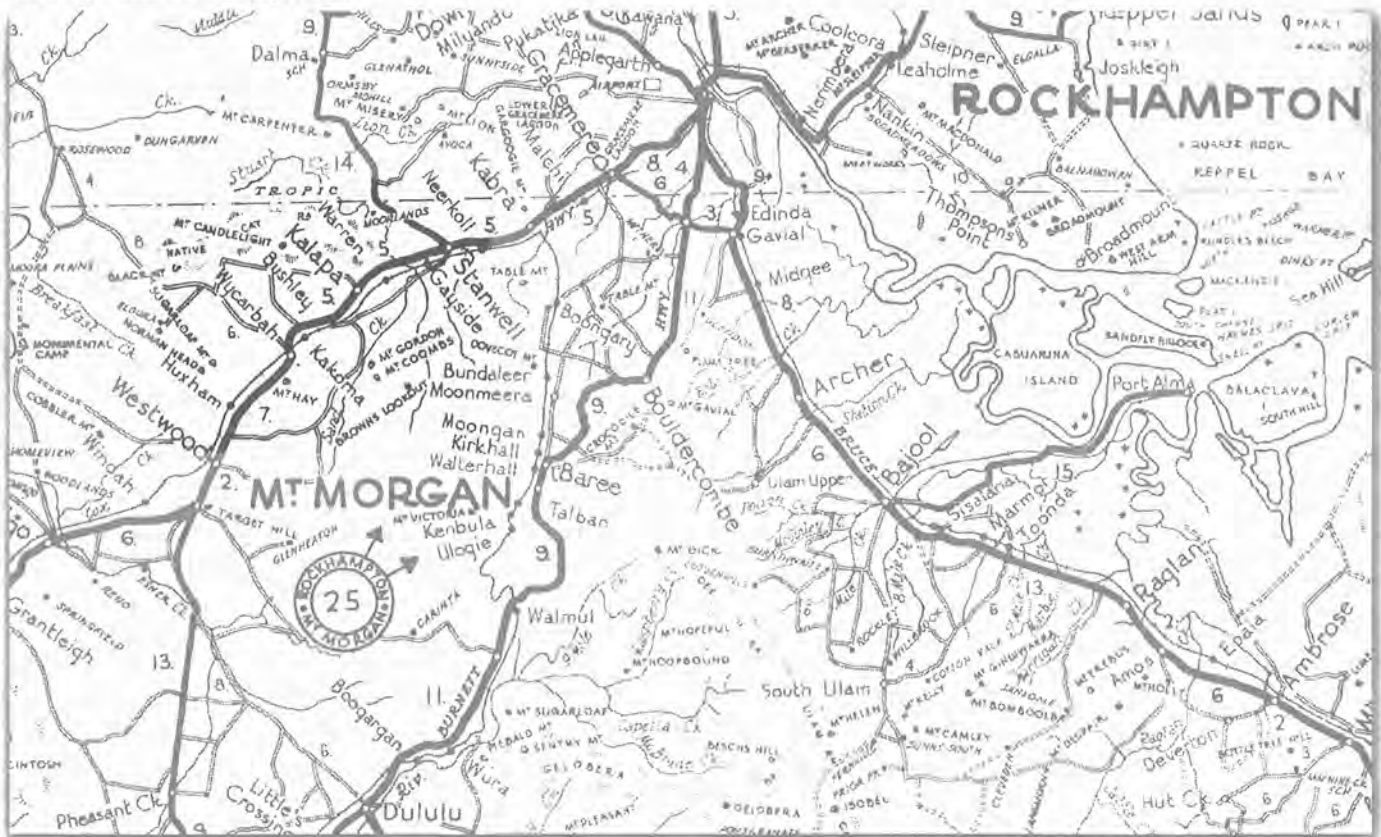
The Recollections of Mabel Kelly

In February 2004, inspired by listening to the recollections of Mabel Kelly aged 89, during a visit by her to Stanwell State School where she told the children of her early life, Dianne Close along with her mother Gloria Sleaford (nee. Lehfeldt) visited Mrs Kelly, to talk about her early days. The following story has been edited from conversations taped on that day.

In 1855 the first Europeans in this area, the Archers, took their sheep through to Sandy Creek where they built some sheep yards. They called them Sheep Yards, but they were only made from forked sticks cut from the timber and then they'd put a rail through. They still call that place up there that Len Coombs owns now, the sheep yards. That's from the original Archer Brothers. There's relics of another yard up past Wycarbah. The Archers travelled through the Rannes area to the top of the Mt Morgan Range from where they could see the Gracemere Lagoon. They travelled down to Gracemere via Sandy Creek. This is the area that my families, the Coombs and Hollands, settled.

followed their sons to Australia. The family settled down and have been there ever since. That's how Grandad got his block at Sandy Creek.

When he arrived, Harry John went out west and became a shepherd. A shepherd's life was extremely lonely and they suffered much hardship and for that they were paid a princely £10 a year plus rations of flour, sugar, tea, salt and mutton, which was brought to them once a month by a carrier. Any boots or clothing that were required, an order would be given to the ration carrier and he would bring them the next month. It certainly taught everyone to be resourceful.



This Kalapa area was originally known as Woodend and in 1923, the name was changed to Kalapa. We were told the name Kalapa came from an Aboriginal word for a hornet or wasp and the Kalapa CWA has a hornet as part of its banner to recognise that fact. Back as far as I can remember there were Aborigines in the area. They had camps around the various waterholes. There's a tree at Morinish they climbed for native bee honey.

My paternal grandfather - Harry John Coombs and his brother Eden, came out here from London when they were 18 and 16. In those days the Government was giving grants of land to immigrants who paid their own passage. It's in the records that Mr and Mrs Coombs - who were Isaac and Elizabeth the parents of Harry John and Eden - received a grant of 80 acres when their



Eden and Harry John Coombs

Grandfather Coombs told the story of how, on one occasion, the river flooded and he was marooned for three weeks with his sheep. His rations were all eaten and no more could reach him so he ate mutton without salt. His younger brother Eden was some miles away, and learned of the flood. He carried a pumpkin over miles and miles and then tied it on his head while he swam across the river with it and together they had a feast. Harry John Coombs went on to marry Sarah Elizabeth Williamson and one of their sons Frank, became my father.



Mabel's mother Martha in her veggie patch.

The rail was put through in 1867 and it went as far as Westwood and all the country on the northeastern side of the rail was scrub. The children asked me what scrub was and I told them it was densely thick areas of trees and vines, so thick that you would get lost going through it. So the rail was built along the scrub line and the other side was forest. Forest is just trees all over scattered about, but scrub was dense.

The people who came here first had to cut tracks in the scrub. The Lehfelts came just after the first to settle and they and other early settlers, built huts made from trees cut in half which they called slabs. That's where the name 'slab hut' came from.

Eventually, settlers began to clear and cut some areas of scrub and they'd burn it and then they'd plant grass or corn or pumpkin in the ashes. That's how they cleared. I can remember from my place to the school was dense scrub and when they burnt it; it was a terrible, immense fire and now there's nothing there.

Around the early 1900s Mount Morgan was an important settlement and a lot of the timber from here was taken to Mt Morgan over the hills to be used for building and in the mine. It's only really 12 miles from Sandy Creek to Mt Morgan going over the hills. Cattle and pigs for Mt Morgan were also driven over those hills and butter and cheese was carried over on packhorse.

My grandma Emma Holland made her own cheese. She came here in the 1800s and in those days you didn't buy a pound of sugar, you bought a 70-pound sugar bag full.

We got rolled oats and other provisions in those bags too. The bag was made from a heavy-duty calico and when that bag was empty, it was used for all manner of things. You would make an apron out of it, or some pants for the children and it would be decorated by sewing some coloured ribbon or material around it.

The bags were also used as saddle bags for transporting the butter and cheese and other items on the packhorses. To make the saddle bags, the sugar bag would be laid flat, then a small slit would be cut on the side where the seam was, then whatever you had to carry would be put in and the leather stirrup strap was threaded through the slit and the bag would be tipped over the other side of the saddle. The same thing would be repeated on the other side of the horse with the process reversed.



Playfair (Now Bushley) State School 1922. Brothers Claude and Roy Coombs, cousin Vic Coombs and Les Loney, the son of the teacher.



Gladys Loney, schoolteacher at Playfair (now Bushley) State School and Ede Holland.

The school here at Kalapa opened in 1915. When it was first built it was not high set, it was raised up later. Before that, the children walked or rode horses to Stanwell School. My father Frank Coombs only walked there once however because he only went to school for one day. By the time Frank was ready for school, his grandfather Isaac had become blind and couldn't work outside, so Isaac and Elizabeth said they would teach my father. Dad said his grandfather would put him on his shoulder and he would direct him by saying go this way or that way, turn left or right and they would get around that way.

In and around the Kalapa area there were a number of dairy farms and people began to send cream to Rockhampton. Bill Lehfeldt had Australian Illawara Shorthorns and there were the Whitely brothers, they had the Jersey stud and Hans Oertel also had a Jersey stud. The State farm between Stanwell and Warren had Ayreshire cattle.

As well as cattle, Vin Jones had Berkshire pigs and Alex Lehfeldt had black Australorp poultry. Apparently he worked at breeding a white Australorp, based on the fact that the black chook had a number of white feathers. He worked at it until he got a white chook. There were white Leghorns but they were like little skinny bantams, but this Australorp was a big fat bird and it was really a big fuss when he did it. He then registered both black and white breeds. There was also the brick works which employed local people. It was near Kalapa.

Kalapa, Wycarbah, Warren and Bushley, they sort of formed our whole district then and the Kalapa Hall was built in 1926. Stanwell was more of a township. They had a hotel and a shop and the School of Arts and water for the railway engines. They also had the railway points, which were used when two trains were coming from opposite directions and the point would be changed so they could by-pass. It was quite an important rail area and they always had a night officer and it was well catered for there. Stanwell also had a quarry where they quarried sandstone. The sandstone was used to build the Rockhampton Post Office and a number of other buildings such as the Church of England Cathedral and Customs House. It all came from there.

For cooking, everybody had wood stoves or others, like Hans Oertel, preferred to cook all their things in a camp oven. You had to make the fire and let it settle down and then put the camp oven in the fire. Beautiful damper came out of camp ovens. So whichever way you cooked, you always had to get the wood and chop the kindling, even when it was wet you had to go and get the wood. Everyone grew their own vegetables; pumpkins and beans, beetroot, carrots, radishes so it was always fresh from the garden. Everyone made their own bread too so it was always homemade or there was damper from the camp oven.

You only had cordial for very special occasions and it was homemade with something like 2 cups of boiling water and 2 cups of sugar. There weren't any fridges, just a safe with a tray underneath to hold water from which strips

of flannelette went up to the top, sucking up the water which evaporated and kept the contents cool. It had to be hung, to keep the ants out. There was a water bag hanging too for cool water. We ate mostly corned beef and we'd kill our own and salt it and it would be hung covered in lumpy salt. If you fancied a chook for tea, you had to go out and catch it, kill it and pluck it before you could cook it.

You have to remember there were no corner stores, so my mum made her own yeast to bake her bread. She'd buy the hops from Foremans, boil them and put sugar with it and then she'd put it into a bottle with a cork on top. Then she'd have to put a piece of string across the cork and tie it off because once it started to ferment, it popped the cork out. She'd be very angry if the cork popped out. Once she had the yeast, she always kept a little bit to start off the next lot with more sugar and more water.

Our washing was done by hand. Everyone had kerosene tins, big square 4-gallon tins. They were used for everything. On washday, the clothes would go in the tin with water and pieces of soap and the tin was always hung over a fire because everyone boiled their washing to kill the germs. As time went on, or if people had more money, they got a big copper on a boiler stand. You still had a fire underneath it to boil the clothes. Everyone had a copper stick. This was a large pole that was used to push the clothes around in the copper and to poke them down and move them about. It was also used to remove the boiling hot clothes into another container, where they were rinsed in cold water. The copper sticks grew smoother and smoother the older they were.

The soap was handmade from fat and kerosene and caustic soda which I hated. The soap was dried and then cut into long bars. Washboards were used too, they were boards with ripples in them and the very dirty washing was rubbed up and down to help remove dirt and stains. There was certainly no time to be bored.

In the very early days, the settlers, and Alice Lehfeldt was one of these, washed their clothes in a waterhole. There used to be a waterhole near Warren Station. It always had water and was really deep then. They'd hang their clothes on string or wire strung from trees and dry their clothes while they were there.

Lighting the lanterns was a nightly ritual using the glass kerosene lights. The bowl held the kerosene with a mantle at the top. I did my homework by lantern light. Electricity arrived at Kalapa after the war. It was around the 1950s and they only put in about two miles of it and some people didn't get it. We did, along with the Wilkinsons, Latimers and Miles. It was a three-phase system to begin with and then it went to single phase. I don't really understand what the difference was.

Nearly every house had verandahs and the houses had big push out windows that you propped open with a big stick. The floors were called ant's nest floors, made from those ants nests you see sticking up in paddocks and it would set pretty hard like cement. My mother would

sprinkle wet tea-leaves on it to settle the dust before sweeping. If you had wooden floors, you got down on your hands and knees to scrub them clean.

In the early days at Kalapa, my husband Jim and I had a mob of cows we had to milk by hand and we started a milk run around Kalapa. We only had a horse and sulky and if you couldn't catch the horse, Jim had to pull the sulky and I would push or else he would get a bit 'scotty'. We only had one can. That's all we sold, one 10-gallon can but it was still too far to carry it the nearly two miles in to Kalapa. Dobbin, our horse was our main support. He was used to plough and scarify, pull the sulky and we'd ride him too. We couldn't have got by without Dobbin.



Mabel riding Dobbin.

Jim was a good worker and he insisted we had to leave at 7 o'clock in the morning if you please, to deliver the milk, so we were up early. We did the separating with a hand-turned unit. When our children Darrell and Verlie got up, I'd be out there milking, yelling instructions to them in the house. It was a long day and I'd often be doing the washing at 10 o'clock at night.

In those early days, times were tough and Jim got sustenance, which was a payment similar to the dole. During the depression, many people got by on sustenance. Jim had to ride a bike to Westwood to get it. It was a good day's ride and then he had to milk the cows when he got home.

There were no Doctors there and you went to Rockhampton to have your babies. With one of mine, there was a flood and we got in but Jim couldn't get back because there were 23 inches of water over the Yeppen crossing. Dr Gold was my Doctor at Bethesda Hospital. The baby wasn't born that night and my husband didn't know what to do so he drove out to the airport and camped in the car fighting off the mosquitoes all night.

There was lots of prickly pear at Kalapa; you've got no idea really. It was just dense. Walking to school it would cut you to ribbons and those cuts hurt like anything. Then the Cactoblastis beetle was developed at a Westwood Government Farm. The results were amazing. It just dried the prickly pear out. It produced a white fluffy looking thing, then it would go yellow and then it just dried out. It was a marvelous thing.

My mother would cook the fruit and make prickly pear jelly. You had to wear leather gloves to pick the purple fruit, then you'd rub it with a rag to get as many prickles off as you could, then wash and scrub it some more, then cook the fruit. When it was cooked, the fruit was squeezed through one of the calico bags that everything came in and she'd leave it hanging up until all the juice dripped out and then she'd put the sugar in it. It was nice.

Our provisions were all bought in big quantities and after the rail came through all our stuff came out on the 'ten-up' train. Even our meat came out wrapped up in newspaper and placed in a sugar bag. People would be horrified now, but we didn't worry about it then and it didn't affect us or make us sick. As I've said, we grew our own vegetables, and if you wanted to bake, you'd just go out and milk the cow or collect some eggs to go in your cakes and biscuits.

When the war came, we were very frightened about the Japanese coming and made plans to send all the cattle out west. We had ration coupons for butter and cheese and there wasn't much available in the shops; for example, you couldn't buy floral material, there was only plain available and that was if you were lucky enough to get it. During the war years all supplies were difficult. If you were careful, you could have dripping or jam on your bread or damper but not both, and syrup - we'd put in half a can of water to make it stretch. Sometimes, because there was nothing else, we had bread with salt and pepper. Everybody lived through it though.

Communication was limited in those days and one day Miss Mott, who was the Kalapa schoolteacher, came up to our property. My husband and I and the children were all out picking some cotton we had planted. I can remember clearly that we all had sugar bags tied round our waist and Miss Mott said 'Mr Kelly, can I have a word with you. I've just had word that you have to drive all your cattle out west and your family will have to go out by train.' Oh gosh, it was a big shock. We were worrying about all sorts of things.

They dug trenches at Kalapa School and Miss Mott trained the kids to run into the trenches. Miss Mott was the one who told all of us our windows had to have black cardboard over them so no light would shine out at night. We thought they'd bomb behind our hill.

Anyway, we waited and waited and eventually, the Japs didn't come over the hill like we thought they were going to and we didn't have to send our cattle away. We didn't know anything about 'the Brisbane line'. We didn't know anything about the bombing in Darwin or Townsville or anything much and it was probably for the best.

The Kalapa CWA, which had started in 1931 with Mrs Alice Lehfeldt as President, had a comfort club run by Mrs Barnett throughout the war years. They knitted socks for the soldiers mainly. A lot of people did it. Jim Barnes met his wife that way. She knitted some socks, put her name into one of them and when Jim received them, he wrote to her and they met when he came back and they married. Back in 1950, it was £2 to join the

CWA. It's \$24 now. I joined in 1950 and in 1953 I went in as President. I kept on in office up until last year and had many wonderful years with them including trips away to Brisbane and Townsville and other places.

The Kalapa Branch of the CWA taken at their 70th Anniversary, July 2001. Mabel is in the centre standing on the right of the lady with the striped top.



Kalapa has been an active community. The first sports day was held in 1926 and there were ambulance dances every year in May. They went on for years and I can remember it was always cold. One year, I can recall having a cold and sucking a lump of sugar with a drop of kerosene on it before I went to the dance. There was the CWA younger set for a while and the Junior Farmers did all sorts of things together including debating and exchange with people from overseas.

I have really enjoyed being involved in my local community over the years with 50 years in the CWA, 35 years at Sunday School and giving sewing talks at school for a great many years. I'm a life member of the Wycarbah Indoor Bowls Club and the Kalapa Singing Group and I've been part of the Hall Committee for as long as I can remember. I was quite tickled but very embarrassed, to receive the Fitzroy Shire Citizen of the Year Award in 1986 and in 2003, the Scope Award for Voluntary Service, when all I've been doing really is keeping myself busy. I am also very proud of the medal I received on Australia Day in 1999 which was for the Fitzroy Shire Council Cultural Award.

When you think back there's been terrific change. Things are so changed that the young people today probably can't even begin to imagine what it was like back then and yet to me, it seems such a short time ago.



Mabel with her Scope Award, 2003.

Twenty-five Years

By Roma (Polly) Orr

It was July 1948, when with two small boys I arrived from Sydney to join my husband, Robert Hargreaves Orr, who had recently joined the Voss Clinic in Bolsover Street, Rockhampton. We rented a 'Queenslander' style home opposite the Wandal Convent and learnt to cope with an ice chest, the heat, rain on a tin roof and our first cyclone.

After twelve months, we purchased a more modern home on Talford Street near Hillcrest Hospital. We lived between two elderly couples who, although kindly, had forgotten what it was like to live near small children.

The grocer called for an order and then delivered weekly. The greengrocer came by horse and cart. Our daughter was born while we lived there and then two more sons.

Bob became interested in community affairs. Legacy, A.M.A., Rockhampton Jockey Club and Rugby Union. He joined the local CMF Unit, the 9th Field Ambulance and eventually was Commanding Officer. Then Commanding Officer of the 42nd battalion. We enjoyed army life with visits throughout Queensland, and what fun – the Annual Military Ball in the old Drill Hall.

The children all started school. There were Mother's Clubs, school tuckshops, sports days and fetes. I was kept busy, driving to Scouts, football, swimming and music

lessons as well as trying to learn Tody Lennon's style of music for myself.

Carnival week in Rockhampton was unique...

Rockhampton Club at home, balls, races, tent shows and always Thursday Family Day at the Rockhampton Show.

I became involved with the Queensland Bush Children's committee. Such a busy and active group. Also, St Georges Home for Children at Parkhurst. We established the 'Friends of St Georges' and made uniforms for school and supplied extra items for the children at the orphanage.

Emu Park was our favourite place for relaxation. Our house was known as 'Surfies Lair', 'Fisherman's Lodge' or 'Orr's Folly' (for Bob's attempt to build a rock wall). The family fished, surfed, explored Keppel Bay and we played golf at the old Zilzie Club, all enjoying the laid back life style of the coast.

My husband had always wanted to do some postgraduate study and arranged to return to Sydney. The children had followed their careers, three married. Reluctantly we left Rockhampton; we had thoroughly enjoyed our twenty-five years as residents and had made some wonderful and lasting friendships. We have always been proud to say, 'We lived in Rockhampton'.



Military Ball courtesy of Queensland State Library

A Busy Life

By John (Jack) Lovat Neish

Edited from an oral tape and conversations

My grandfather's name was Benjamin Derrett. Ben Derrett was involved in the initial discovery of coal at Blair Athol. He turned the first sod of the Blair Athol mine and went on to become the Manager of the mine. With his wife, one son George and a goat, he had come up from Sydney in a covered wagon and settled at Copperfield. They had five more children – my mother Mary Anne, Lydia, Beatrice, Lewis and Ethel. That first wife died and he subsequently remarried around the time of the beginning of Blair Athol mine. One son eventually became the mechanical engineer and the other became the electrical engineer of the mine, and they stopped there all their life until they retired. The two boys Lewis and George owned a mine of their own and they did quite well out of gold mining as a side line and, as was the norm in those days, they inherited all of their father's property when he passed away, while the daughters received nothing.



Mary Ann Derrett



In front of the boiler at No 3, c.1915. Back row from left: Alex Harrison snr, Teddy Murphy, Charles McCarthy, Jack Dickson; second row: Ami Dodds, Jack Whyte, Alex Harrison jnr; third row: Albert Spring, Walter Spring; front row: Alfred Spring, George Derrett, Frank Spring. Source: J&R Scott.

Blair Athol records show George Derrett.

In 1892, Grandfather was secretary/president of the committee to petition to have a provisional school built. It was opened in 1893 with his daughter, my mother, Mary Ann Derrett, as the first head teacher. She was in her 20s at that time and stayed there teaching for the following ten years during which time she taught Lewis and her other sisters. In 1894, Mary Ann was also appointed as mail receiving officer at Blair Athol. Mary Ann had received some teacher training but an extract from a Clermont booklet gives insight into the difficulties she faced:

'While this development (the school) lent an air of semi-permanence to the community (of Blair Athol), a thought might be spared for the tribulations of Mary Ann Derrett, the teacher. When the little timber and corrugated iron school opened, her pupils ranged from five to thirteen years, spread over five grades. Nine of the children, aged between five and ten, were virtually illiterate. During her first five years in charge she enrolled 122 children, but the population was so itinerant that average attendance over the period was around twenty. Most of her charges walked at least

three kilometres to and from school and the younger children, at least, would have been more inclined to sleep through the hot summer hours than to learn.'

When the school began, a bell owned by Caroline Madge was borrowed and used as the school bell. This bell has its own history and amazingly now resides with Caroline's granddaughter-in-law Ann Barraclough, here in Rockhampton, just around the corner from where I live.

My father came out from Scotland with his parents when he was nine. His father was a shoemaker and had a business here. My father's mother died and his father re-married. They decided to return to Scotland but my father who was around 19 at the time did not want to go

so he moved in with his relative William Burns and his wife Margaret who was the Burns of Burns and Twigg. William Burns had no children, so he and Aunt Margaret took on the job of looking after my father and they were very close.

My father worked at Burns and Twigg for a while and then it got to a point where the old Scotsman was a bit hard to get on with and he wanted to go out on his own. As part of the Burns and Twigg businesses, they had a big three storeyed flour mill in their yard and it appears the

Twigg a railway carriage builder. Burns arrived in Rockhampton first where he worked for a while in the railway workshops and then around 1875, he bought the Peterkin's Vulcan Foundry and then bought Twigg

The No 1 Engine (marked on front) taken in Rockhampton, date unknown.



Jack centre front with three brothers L to R Harold Graham and Norman



up and they became partners. From his experience as a carriage maker, Twigg branched out into pattern making. They went on to have extensive interests and the work they did covered a vast array of business. I recall that there was a Cobb and Co coach up in the rafters at the workshops for many years and I have a photograph of the No. 1 Rail Engine and the carriages used here. It has been verified as having been taken in Rockhampton and was probably worked on at the workshops as we did a great deal of work for the Railway.

Although the Burns and Twigg business was built into a very successful one and had grown from a very modest blacksmith's shop to occupy three acres of ground bounded by Kent, Campbell and Stanley Streets, Burns himself very literally, missed out on a gold mine.

Lorna McDonald, in her book *Rockhampton, A History of City and District*, tells the story. 'Burns employed a man by the name of Sandy Gordon as a miner and prospector on various goldfields around Rockhampton and in 1881 was prospecting at Raglan for Burns receiving 30/- a week along with half of any gold found. Burns himself later told how Sandy had offered to take him to a 'low grade show' on the Dee.' Burns however was too busy with other things and had no time to spend on gold prospecting and history chose another path.

I stayed with the company for 47 years after my father's illness in 1934 put me on to the Board of Directors. In the next year after my father's death I became joint managing director with Llewellyn Twigg who was a

manager was bringing wheat out from England but he was fiddling the books somehow and the whole thing folded up. My father by then was a trained accountant and he became involved in the winding up, which led to him moving to Townsville and working for a time with a flour mill up there. He must have met my mother in his travelling days going from Townsville out through Blair Athol while he was still involved in flour. One of my brothers was born in Townsville.

I was the youngest of four sons, born in 1911 in Brisbane where the family had moved. My father was then tied up in the furniture trade and he finished up with a big furniture company. He was there for around 30 years.

When in 1932, old Burns turned 92 my father came back into the Burns and Twigg business. He was only there a couple of years and I was sent for, to come up to Rockhampton because my father was sick with cancer. I had been working in Brisbane, also as an accountant and when I arrived, I had to learn the job in a hurry. There was a staff of around 100 at that time.

Burns was a Scot and Twigg had come here from Wales. They had worked together in the Ipswich railway workshops where Burns was an engineer and

generation older. In 1955 Llewellyn's son and namesake took his place.

I met my wife Edith via a rather circuitous route, which began by going to Sydney for a holiday. I had been aware of her in Rockhampton, but we had not been involved socially prior to this holiday. It was 1936 and Mother and I drove to Sydney to take this holiday. There were few bridges crossing rivers then so they had to be crossed by car ferries. It took two days to get to Brisbane and another three or four to make it to Sydney. In Sydney, I had arranged to be met by the RACQ at Hornsby where they took the car for us and arranged its storage until we needed it to come home.

We stayed at a guest house called Kirribilli House which was in view of both the Prime Minister's and the Governor's residences right on Sydney Harbour. While I was there, a letter came from Rockhampton from Edith Broadfoot. She and her brother were trying to book in. Mother and I were leaving for home the next day so the owners asked us if we would ring them on our return to let them know there were no vacancies, which we did, only to be told that in the time it had taken us to return, a vacancy had arisen. On their return, I was invited to come up to Edith's place for a sing-song. So that was the start of a wonderful time together. We married some five years later on 27 January 1941 and for our 60th Anniversary received letters from the Queen, Governor General, Prime Minister, State Premier and various MP's. Edith had a very successful commercial business called Art Adds Advertising, which she operated from premises in Quay Street where she did all manner of graphics such as display work for the Show, colour slides for the movie theatre and catalogues for Stewarts, Kirby's, Lucas and Bayard's. She was responsible for all the placards and

campaign material associated with the election of Frank Forde to Queensland Parliament prior to his short-term tenancy of the Premier's position.

She continued working until some time after we married when she had an opportunity to sell. After that, her focus was her family and then her artwork for which she became very well known with her works hanging prominently in many places. She also published a number of books and put together a unique and exquisite collection of dolls, which she designed and made from forming and firing them, adding eyes etc, including the painting of them, their hair, which was often made from her own and the design and manufacture of their clothes. Edith was also a brilliant pianist and was a Licentiate of the Royal School of Music, London. She taught piano after we were married as well as being involved with the Musical Union and the Little Theatre.

Rockhampton was an important town, helped along by the gold at Mt Morgan and the city was a busy place. It's quite a different town now. There was a beautiful roof garden restaurant at Bayard's, a general merchandise store, on the corner of East and Fitzroy Streets where you could see all down the river while you had a nice morning tea. The original NSW Bank on the corner of Quay and Denham and the Commercial Bank buildings in East Street, both made from local sandstone, still stood. All the banks in fact, were in and around the city centre which was the hub of Rockhampton and the bank staff would just walk around and actually hand their cheques over to each other. Ships were still delivering goods onto the docks.

I was wearing white suits and pith helmets and the ladies wouldn't be seen dead without their stockings and corsets. Going shopping into town or to appointments, they would be dressed up with hats and gloves and you never saw a man at any public event without a tie.

I built our home in Jessie Street in 1941 after our marriage and it's still going strong. We had five sons and life was very busy for us. Burns and Twigg was a big business and I always felt you had to have something else to take your mind off your work so I became a Mason and have been one for 60 years.

Our boys all attended Allenstown School and I was on the committee for 14 years, nine years as president and, as a life member of the P & C, I was delighted to be invited last year to the 125th Anniversary of the school. We have also always been involved with our church. I started playing golf in 1936 and, with the exception of the war years, I played right up until I turned 88 in 1988. Rockhampton Rotary has also been a part of my life. I was president during 1961 – 62 and we had a membership of around 90. The Rotary Lookout on the Athelstane Range was completed during my term as

Edith with one of her favourite dolls. She was a member of the Australian Plangon (Antique & Modern Doll) Collectors Club Inc for 30 years.



president. I was a Patron of Central Girls School and I was also tied up with the Grammar School where I am a life member of their Parents and Friends. I was also on their Board of Trustees for many years.

During 1957 – 9 I was the president of The Employers' Association of Central Queensland, which at that time had been operating for 42 years. It occupied an office at 130 East Street and a number of movers and shakers responsible for the development of CQ were on the committee at that time. People and businesses such as : F A Horner, (Edwards & Murphy P/L); C Rivers, (Walter Reid & Co); H Lloyd, John M (Headrick & Co); C B Worthington, (Blair Athol Coal & Timber Co); W L Blanning, (Blanning's Biscuit Factory); J Anderson, (City Printing Works); E P Cominos, (Cominos Café); P Garrett, (Central Qld Meat Export Co); T B Macaulay, (Denham Bros); W L Fellows, (Port Curtis Co-op Dairy Assn.); A J Beasley, (Rickarts Pty Ltd); R Macaree, (Rockhampton Gas & Coke Co); W Tucker, (Tucker & Tucker Pty Ltd); L Laver, (Lavers Sports Depot).

The annual report booklet from which the following photograph has been taken gives some interesting facts and figures. It tells us that over the period April 1958 – February 1959 the State Basic Wage had risen from £12/4/- to £13/-/- . An increase of 16/- a week which 'over all industries, amounts to a considerable additional cost.' Also, it states that the Federal Basic Wage Inquiry of 1958



JL Neish, President, 1957-1959. Taken from the 42nd Annual Report for the year ended 28 February 1959 of The Employers' Association Of Central Queensland.

resulted in an increase of 5/- per week for males and 3/9 a week for females. The closure of banks on Saturdays was in the process of being determined with the options of all or part of Saturday bank trading to be considered with the possibility of late shopping and banking hours on Friday evenings to be substituted for Saturday trading. It makes the point that 'the Court is not in favour of abolishing Saturday morning trading (for banks) and it is unlikely that the Government will introduce legislation to alter the existing conditions'. Also, it notes that trade unions with members working on Saturday, have now made application to receive time and a half rates of pay. Burns and Twigg made all the tubing and trusses that went into erecting the majority of the showground buildings and show time was always a very busy time for the business in many ways.

James Kelly now occupies the site that was Burns and Twigg on the corner of Kent and Stanley Streets. It was a big company. We had hardware, boiler making, steel fabrication, a moulding shop and fitters and turners. It was a big concern. At its peak it employed over 100 people and when I left in August 1977 there were about 65. It was sold shortly after that. I was the biggest shareholder in the company from Burns side and I sold to the Twigg side of the family and then they sold out to J M Kelly and Co.

During the war our company went over to war work making presses for shell cases and other war material, and I had three cost systems going – Burns and Twigg's, one for the railway on a cost plus basis and another one for the Commonwealth Government. A government man would come up and go through all of the figures and he'd chop you down. That was us right through the war – we were flat out. I didn't have a cost clerk for quite a while and finding manpower was very difficult. I finished up going day and night trying to keep it all together myself. I had a bit of a breakdown after the war from the pressure.

I was classified reserved occupation because we went over to war work, not the least of which was repairing a lot of the vital rolling stock on the railway. We had a big siding in the front of the building in Kent Street. With the added pressure of war work, the shortage of manpower and extra work with the Voluntary Defence Corp, those who had to stop behind to keep it all together so that the boys who came back had a job to come to, had a fairly hard time.

I was not aware that the Americans' arrival was imminent and I was at my desk when all of a sudden I heard a rumbling coming down Stanley Street and it was the Americans coming up from Pt Alma and Gladstone. Driving tanks, jeeps and a variety of other war vehicles, they'd arrived! Something like 70 000 Americans added to the regular population of 30 000. Nearly half the Yeppoon Road was camps. All the Berserkers were camps. There were camps everywhere.

The Americans had a huge social impact on the town. The American economy of the time was accustomed to a very high cost of living and those Americans had big money compared to our Australians and when they arrived they spent. They took half our nice girls away to America. They gave them things you couldn't buy here – silk stockings and perfume etc.

It made a big difference in other ways too. When the full troop trains were going through, which they did on a regular basis from both north and south, there would be locals there from the pineapple farms with big baskets of pineapples, selling them for £5 each; then they'd do the same with watermelons. They would have a knife and cut them up and sell them; they did well.

Every American that came here loved our steaks. At work, they were always after the off-cut steel to cook a bit of steak behind their tents. Because we were a large company and were accountable, we had no way to hide money, but other people, milk bars for example, made a fortune. For some reason every Yank wanted a knife, so there was a blacksmith down town who got all these old hacksaw blades and he put a handle on them and charged £5 each and he had a trunk full of money. He bought himself a Humber Snipe with the proceeds.

Taxis were also in great demand because they were forever hiring taxis and any form of transport to take them from the hotel or the movies and dances, out to their camps. One night I was going out the gate at Burns and Twigg and this chap who was more than a little the worse for wear put up his hand and stopped me. I asked where he was going and he said, 'Out to Balmoral' so I said 'I'll give you a lift.' 'How much?' he said at the end of the ride and when I told him I didn't want his money, he was most emphatic I take something, and threw about 10 dollars on the back seat. I took it home and gave it to the kids.

The Negroes were totally segregated, it was like they were a different army. For the whole four or five years the Negroes would come in with their own order book and the white Americans would come in and they'd have their order book for their part.

I'll always stick up for the Americans who were here. I was here and saw them and I made quite a few friends. They weren't trained when they got here and they trained the best they could and I have a lot of time for them. I lived through the Coral Sea Battle with constant news in the papers and on the radio. Everyone had air raid shelters in their back yards. I was also in the VDC (Voluntary Defence Corp). I was on duty at the aerodrome the night they dropped the bombs on Townsville. We all thought we were going to be next. Thank heavens for McArthur. The Brisbane line was to be the defence line until he arrived and McArthur said, 'Don't be stupid, we're going to fight them in the islands'. He was no mug.

I was told a story that was purported to be true by a chap named Hull who lived in Yeppoon, who only died about three years ago. He was tied up with both the railway and the council. His wife was a very good dressmaker, and she made Edith's dresses.

While he was with the railway, they opened up a rail depot at Clairview on the way to Mackay. They were living there in tents with a lot of equipment being used to help feed the troops going through on the trains. There is a nice little beach at Clairview. One night, just sitting up on the hill with a couple of kero lights, they saw this rowboat coming in. The person in the rowboat was a Japanese. He walked up with a torch, which he shone, on them. He pointed to their tea so they gave him some and he walked back down the hill to his boat. They got on the buzzer they had and reported it and went out themselves in their rowboat and they could see a submarine. The story goes that was the sub that sank the Centura – the hospital ship, just off Caloundra where everyone lost their lives.

Whether that story is true or not, I believe that's how close they were. It is known that they found records on some of the Japanese prisoners in Cowra plotting the coalmines at Ogmoo, Blair Athol and Collinsville near Townsville. Don't forget all their vessels were steam and they needed coal. That's why they had spotters all through this area, because the coal was vital to their continuation.

After the Americans went home, the economy of the town dipped. Mt Morgan had finished before the war and the war filled that gap. After the war it was a reality check for quite some time, compounded by difficulties in obtaining supplies of all manner of things.

Rockhampton was a good town to raise our five sons in. I am proud of the way they have all gone on to do well in their own fields of endeavour. We had some great family holidays as they were growing up over the years. For about nine years we had rented a house at Cooe Bay and then I decided to purchase our own caravan. I had some instruction from a local policeman to sharpen up my skills and then the holiday period came. All loaded up and excited to be on our first caravan adventure we took off down Jessie Street where, heading toward the Mater Hospital, there is a substantial gutter type dip in the road. As we went over the dip, the kids were yelling, 'Dad, the caravan is going to pass you'. The van had come off. Next thing the van went past the car, I slowed down which was lucky because there was a car coming toward us. The van veered across in front of the two cars, mounted the footpath and came to a dead stop buried in a big load of sand that had recently been delivered on the footpath. Who should walk out from behind the pile of sand, but the policeman who had taught me!

I've kept very busy since my retirement on 31 August 1977 with all my interests. I know many who have retired and in a few years they're gone. I've always had something to do and I believe it keeps me going.

The First Long Haired Larrikin

Ron (Mick) Featherstone

Edited from an oral tape

Grandfather who was an old Pommy used to call all the boys in the family Mick and all the girls Biddy and although I was christened Ron, 'Mick' stuck to me and there are only about 5 percent of people who know my real name. My cousin Faye and her family and a few others call me Ron but everyone else knows me as Mick. Dad's mother came out with her parents from Germany and they lived down at Tin Hill behind the railway station at Lakes Creek. There was originally a sawmill up there and they lived in the house alongside the sawmill. Her mother and youngest brother were killed down near the Kalka Pub when the horse and sulky bringing them home from the midwives' house, where she had just had the baby, bolted.

Dad's mother and father lived out at Parkhurst, it was only 100 acres, but they supported ten kids and Grandfather worked at Lakes Creek, they all worked at Lakes Creek – they rode their horses in every day. My dad was born out there and our family was practically reared out there as we were backwards and forwards all the time.

My mother's grandfather Augustus Phillipi, came from Germany. He was 17 and his brother 14. They came out by sailing boat to get away from a new stepmother. They didn't like Sydney and they heard talk about Port Curtis so they jumped on a boat and came up to Gladstone where the population was 26. Rocky wasn't here then. The younger brother got a job cooking there somewhere and Augustus got a job as a shepherd out near Rannes. He worked around there until somehow he became part of the Cullin-la-ringo massacre and he had his head smashed in. I don't know where they took him or how old he was at that time, but he ended up having a leather cap stitched into his skull somehow. He went on to have bullock teams that went from Rocky to Aphis Creek and Clermont taking supplies out and bringing the wool back to St Lawrence. If it was dry, it would take him six months to go from Rocky to Clermont and bring a load of wool back into St Lawrence, where it was loaded on the boats and then he'd come to Rocky and get re-supplied and go back again. So, if the weather was good, he'd manage two trips a year.

Later on when Mt Morgan started, he was hauling mine props from Kabra. Before the railway line went in, he hauled props and supplies over the Razor Back and then over the years he had some property and out in Rolleston, he started to go blind. His wife put him in the spring cart and it took them three weeks to get in to Rocky. The doctor here opened him up and took this leather skull cap out. It was squashing the nerve apparently and the moment that was done, he got his eyesight back.

He lived 'til he was around 88/89 and died in 1916. We often say he fathered half of Mt Morgan – the Jacksons, the Phillipis, the Mathesons, the Warriies, they are all

related to us somehow. His wife Rebecca brought in the convict connection to our family because her father was banished to the colonies for relieving a gentleman of his wallet and watch. He was a highwayman in England who apparently had 12 months on the hulks before being sent out to Moreton Bay. After seven years he was freed and he met and married Ellen Bowen who had come out from Ireland. They eventually settled in Mt Morgan and they're both buried in the old cemetery there.

Up until my grandfather died in 1950, I spent a lot of time out at Parkhurst. It was pretty sparsely populated with no running water and no electricity up around the back. They had kero lights and candles. There was a creek in front of the house and we learnt to swim there. My uncles would throw us in and someone would be in there to rescue you if you got into trouble.

For water, they had a soak there in the dry times and you'd go down in the spring cart to get it and my old man said that if that dried up, there was a spring behind where the cement works is now, and when that dried up they went to Maloney's swamp which is in where Maloney Street and Alexandra Streets are in Park Avenue/Kawana area.

It always rained for the two weeks of school holidays in August so you did nothing, but in the summer holidays, there was always a wet season and you did your swimming at the bogey hole down here at Kalka Shades; Claybank near the bridge at Kmart and High Street; the top end of Berserker Street was the stump holes; Kerrigan Street where the bridge is, was Brams Waterhole – it was a good hole to swim in, very treacherous, but good. And Reaney's Crossing at the top end of Dean Street, right where the bridge goes over, is where the waterhole was. There was an old tea tree there and you used to shinny up the tea tree and dive bomb. Then they put a causeway over it and that was the end of the swimming hole. There were swimming holes everywhere on Moores Creek in the wet season.

You got crawchies everywhere round Rocky too. The only place you never got crawchies was up here where the library is in Elphinstone Street. That chain of water holes ran from where the high school is down behind the Scout Hall to Mosten Street, but when it got past Elphinstone Street, the holes changed somehow and you never got crawchies – little crabs yes, but no crawchies.

Out at Red Hill about where Harvey Norman is, there was a beautiful hole there, you got massive big crawchies out of that and out at the University as well. The last feed of crawchies I had was when they were upgrading the coal lines from here to Blackwater, eliminating the old wooden bridges and putting culverts in the main waterholes. We always had crawchies for smoko and dinner while that job was on.

I was born in 1935 while my parents were living in the

house in Elphinstone Street that is now Home Delivered Computers. My dad built that in 1932. In company with about 400 other kids, I went to the Berserker School. I started during the war and while that was on, because of a shortage of teachers, we only went to school until half past 12 and then Grades Four, Five, Six and Seven would come and do the rest of the day. In 1943 I spent a year in Toowoomba where I turned eight.



Me at 8 years of age in 1943, in fancy dress as Al Capone

I returned to Berserker School for another couple of years until in 1946, I had an old teacher who, because of the shortage, had retired and come back and my mother wasn't happy with my progress. She made the decision to send me to boy's school which meant I had to catch two buses there and two buses home. I walked into the classroom on the first day and who should be sitting behind the desk but that same old teacher from Berserker. It was a waste of 12 months.

I hated school. I hated school that much, I detested it. I liked maths, I liked geometry but I hated that ancient history, it was of no interest to me. I was not even a little bit interested in something that happened 1000 years ago and so, at the start of 1949, the headteacher said to my teacher, 'If he can get a reasonable job I'll let him go'. I was 13 and eight months. That was on a Friday. Saturday, there was a job in the paper; Monday I went for an interview, Tuesday I went for another interview and Wednesday I started work. It was 1 March and it was the day of the 1949 cyclone and that was my introduction to

the work force. Riding that pushbike home over the old swinging Fitzroy Bridge at five o'clock in the middle of a cyclone. I worked there for 15 months as a 'buying in boy' for Denham Brothers.

Down where Norm's Gym is in East Street, Denham Bros, Walter Reid's, Thomas Browns, John Headrick and others all had their warehouses. If Denham Bros had an order for something which they didn't have, they'd give me a chit and my job was to go around to other warehouses and see if they had it and bring it back. Then in April/May 1950, I got a job as an apprentice cooper, down at Lakes Creek Meatworks.

When coopering was in its heyday, there were 35 Coopers and an apprentice with about 15 labourers working at any one time. Despite the fact that I was off work for around seven months with an injured back and then did three months of National Service training, I still completed my apprenticeship in around the normal time of five years. This was because we worked four nights – Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, all day Saturday and all day Sunday accumulating around 72 hours each week. Because of the hours I worked, I had no teenage years. All I knew was work.

Apart from the meatworks jobs we did a lot of other local work, brewery work, soft drink suppliers Edwards and Murphy had wooden vats and kegs and we repaired all of them and made new ones when we were slack. We made a lot of buoys for the harbour board too and we would stockpile in the quiet time for the next year. Steel drums started coming in and they began cutting back and around the end of 1956 they paid us all off. Then, just before Christmas, Lakes Creek got a contract from a sugar mill to supply 1200 wooden kegs equivalent in size to a 44 gallon drum, to ship molasses overseas somewhere. We worked for six weeks, all over Xmas and New Year and then the contract was cancelled and we were put off again.

After a few weeks, I managed to get a job at Swift Alligator Creek Meatworks in Townsville. They guaranteed me nine months coopering but it lasted five years before steel drums took over up there. There were four coopers up there and we worked all year round stockpiling. We'd work anything up to 72 hours in the season but the season up there only lasted from four – six months. We lived in the barracks 18 miles out of town. In the season, there'd be 350 people living in the barracks, some of them were real characters. They were mostly seasonal meat workers. Alligator always started their kill the day after Labour Day and they kept going as long as they had cattle. It cost you nothing to live in the barracks but you had to buy a weekly galley ticket. It was 3/3d a meal when I first went there at the end of '56 and it was 4/- when I left in '61.

A Frenchman and his Australian wife ran the galley. He was a pastry cook and he made beautiful bread and buns and cakes. The wife looked after everything else. They needed a staff of ten – 15 to feed 350 of us in the morning and they supplied tea and smoko for everyone – it was a

bit of a job but they certainly supplied good food.

There were about six houses and six barracks and the galley and during the war they built a community hall because there were a lot of army blokes out there protecting the place and you would get someone come out and put on a follies type show on a Sunday night. A bloke from Charters Towers would bring a projector down for a picture show and he also had a slate topped billiard table. On Wednesday, which was payday, down between the third and fourth barracks, there was a square and that was where the two up game was held. They came out from Townsville for the two up game and in the laundry, they had a big table and they'd play ins and outs which was a gambling game played with dice.

It was quite an interesting place and I liked it. When the meatworks closed down out of season, there were about six of us left and we had to batch for ourselves. They'd leave the coldroom in the butcher shop going and the ice works and once a week you'd go into town and shop. Tinned beer was just coming in, stubbies weren't around, but everyone drank full bottles of beer. If you wanted a carton of beer from town, you rang up Clarrie Martin at Stuart who had the taxi. It was £2/10/- for the drive out and £2/10/- for the carton of beer, so it would cost you 5 quid for a carton.

When the work ran out in Townsville, I went out to Mt Isa looking for work, but they were just coming out of a major strike and weren't putting anyone on so I came back to Rocky and started in the railway as a fettler out at Gracemere.

My first day of work was 104 degrees in the shade and I wasn't working in the shade!

I didn't think I'd last the day because I'd always worked under cover, but I stuck it out and lasted 33 years.

I travelled all over Central Queensland with the railway. I worked all the Blackall area with a track re-sleeper machine and then re-sleepered from Winton back to Longreach. When we packed up the camp to go from Blackall over to Winton, I needed a haircut and had a day free. There were no barbers in Winton it turned out, but there was a bloke at a menswear shop who used to cut hair in the back of the shop on Saturday afternoon for all the shearers when they came to town. I lined up watching him cut everyone else's hair. It turned out he had St Vitas' Dance and the scissors were up high in the air and they were doing about 100 clicks a second and about 150 mile an hour coming down to your head and you had to duck at the right time otherwise you got speared. I thought 'I'm not drunk enough for this' so I left and went out to the camp and was there for the usual three months or so.

Because of the missed cut and long before it became fashionable, I was one of the first longhaired larrikins in the area after going about six months without a cut. Anyway, I decided one Saturday morning to jump on the

train and go back. I got a bit of booze in me including about half a bottle of Bundy and I went and had myself a haircut, but I was a nervous wreck by the time I came out!

We travelled from Barcaldine to Rocky, down as far as Rosedale, up as far as Bloomsbury north of Mackay. They'd have half mile of track for you to lift, we'd lift that and shift on to wherever the next gang was. We might be up at Ilbilbie near Mackay and then the next job would be at Barcaldine or Emerald so we were just constantly travelling all the time.



Re-sleepering out west

We'd shift camp about every three months living in bondwood huts and then, about 1964/65, I got a job on a Mantissa which was a mechanical packing/tampering machine. This sleeper packing machine was a two-man job and we travelled all round wherever there was a relay gang. There were about 12 relay gangs in the Central Division and each gang used to do about 6 mile a year. The Mantissa Gang had a camp wagon, which travelled on the rail, and you had a wagon with your fuel, toilet, shower and water with you because some of the places you went were just out in the middle of nowhere.

There are a lot of railway sidings where we worked such as Rim Banda and Chorregan, which don't exist any more and you can't even see where they've been. They were there for 50 – 60 years and now you can't see anything. A bit of fence, a slab of concrete if you know where to look, but mostly they've just been taken over by nature. The last time I went between Longreach and Winton, there were a couple of signposts for the tourist coaches and that's all.

Then we were sent to Gilliat on the Mt Isa line, west of Julia Creek to learn to operate a Placomatic which was an automatic tampering machine built by an Italian firm originally, but then in South Africa. We stayed up there for about three months and then we were sent to Brisbane to get another machine similar to the Placomatic – an Electramatic. We brought it back here and operated that for quite a few years.

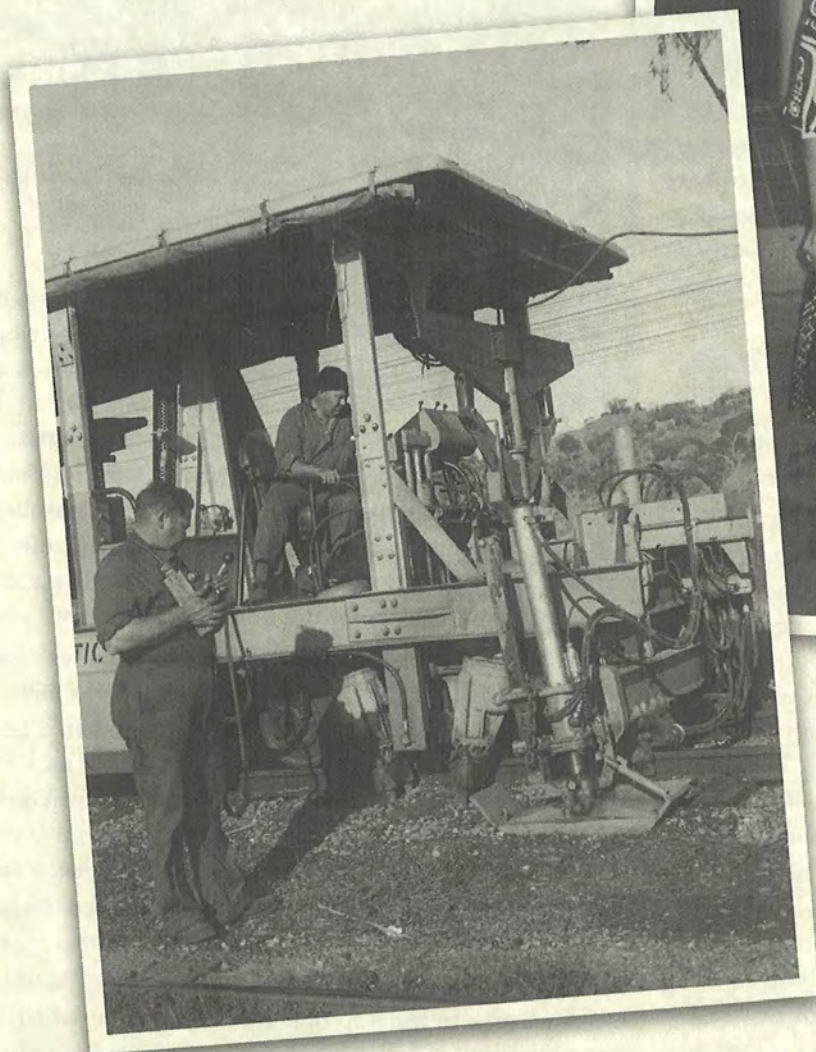
Then we had another machine, it was a ballast regulator, which was a dozer grader and broomwall combined and then in 1970/71 they decided to form a gang here to just tamp from Rocky to Blackwater and all coal lines from here to Gladstone and that was a 13 man gang with two mobile homes and we'd just shift camp from place to place.

I was out at Dingo during the 73/74 flood when all the track got washed away and we repaired all that and then they wanted the machines down here at Woolwash because it was all washed away there too. That's where I was when my father got sick and I came home to help my mother look after him. I transferred to the Railway workshop and I was there for 20 years, making a total of 33 years with the railway.

I had some good times. I knew every publican and his wife in the area. They all knew we were coming because they'd see the machines and the track coming and they'd order another couple of kegs in.

I married in 1988 when I was 53 years old and my wife passed away in 1993. That's part of another story.

Looking back, I suppose I've had a pretty interesting life.



The first QR electromatic machine, 1966.



Self and wife Liz, taken 1992

Medicine Makers of Old

by Reg Fitzpatrick

'Take these capsules three times a day until the course is finished' or maybe 'you will need to take these tablets each day for life'. These days such instructions from your doctor are quite commonplace aren't they?

After perhaps a short wait at your local pharmacy you are handed the appropriate package of tablets or capsules, (checked for appropriate strength and reactions with other medications and labelled with appropriate instructions) and then it's up to you to take them.

Few may remember the days when you came back later while the 'chemist' made up your prescription, which the doctor had hand written in Latin (or a shortened version). The chemist would be required to weigh, measure and mix many liquids and powders to 'make up' your bottle of medicine.

There would often be one ingredient which was a flavouring of sorts maybe liquorice or orange syrup but it didn't seem to make much difference. Every medicine in those days was expected to be nasty.

There were other labour intensive medicines too – powders mixed from various ingredients and wrapped separately for each dose (like the old Bex that oldies might remember) or often greasy ointments or liniments. All had to be weighed, measured and mixed perhaps in a mortar pounded with a pestle. Medicines for children were expected to be 'horrible' and the only recommended way to take them was hold your nose and swallow quickly. The word 'antibiotic' had not been invented yet.

The prescription records were hand written in a large leather bound indexed 'Script Book'.

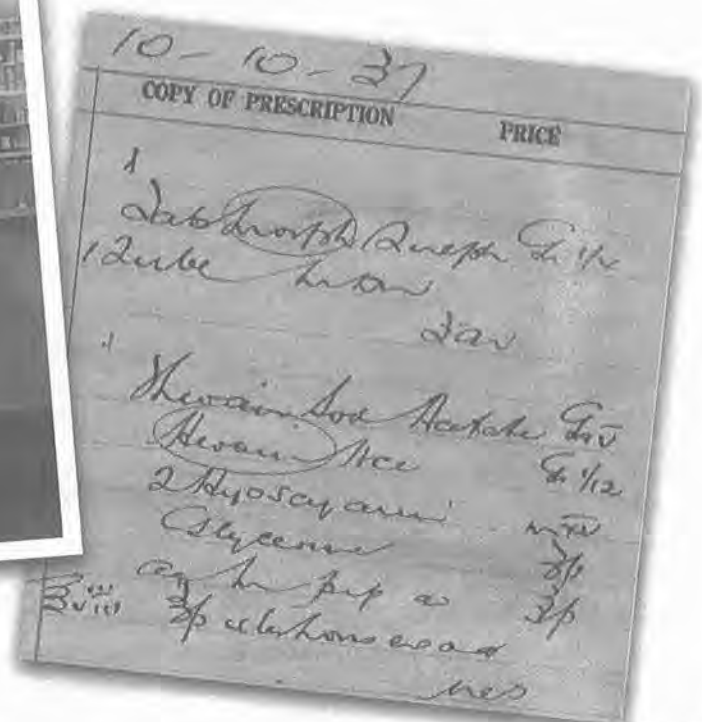
The page illustrated is from the first Script Book of Harold Fitzpatrick who resigned as Manager of the AFS Dispensary and established his own pharmacy in East Street in 1937. This shows tablets of morphine for the top patient and heroin included in a mixture for the second patient.

It wasn't that unusual to have Heroin Linctus prescribed to ease a cough. It worked too! Even today the cough suppressants we use are less addictive variations of the heroin and morphine that were used in the 'old days'.

And of course there were the tonics with a little bit of strychnine or arsenic in them. Very bitter of course but that was the idea...this was supposed to stimulate the appetite.

Harold Fitzpatrick practiced pharmacy and watched all the changes until his retirement, aged 74 years, in 1975. His son Reg had qualified as a pharmacist in 1950 and worked with his dad until his retirement and the sale of the pharmacy in 1975.

There was no hint of computers for recording prescription details even in 1965. Reg had instituted a 'revolutionary' card index system to cross reference drug interactions and allergies (e.g. to the newly introduced penicillin) and this only after a lengthy trial running both 'systems'. The card index system proved very useful to monitor the ongoing medications of regular users, as each family's records were all kept together – a new concept for that time. The 'revolutionary' new recording system was written up in an article in *The Australian Journal of Pharmacy* in 1961. Oh what a delight it would have seemed to have computers to keep those records and search for data so easily.



The Early Years

From the memoirs of William Thomson of Biloela.

Edited from an oral tape and conversations in 2004, by Elizabeth Muston.

William (Bill) Thomson began his working life as a schoolboy. Now in his 87th year, living in retirement at Biloela, he recalls with accuracy and alacrity, people, places and events from a bygone era.

From 'telephone boy' to drover, packhorse mailman to storekeeper and business proprietor, Bill's life story reveals a treasure chest of memories of a home and working lifestyle younger readers can only imagine. Here he opens the pages of his book of memories to where it all began.

EM

I was born at Springsure on 26 June 1917, the first-born of twins – a boy and a girl.

Springsure, a picturesque town set in a valley surrounded by mountains and hills, was thought to be named for the creek which winds through its centre. At one time this stream had permanent springs with clear running water and during heavy rain the waterfalls cascading down the mountains were a sight to behold. All this is under the mantle of the natural wonder known far and wide as the 'Virgin Rock' set high on Springsure Mountain. In days gone by, because of the peaceful and tranquil lifestyle, the town was often referred to as 'Sleepy Hollow'.

The population of Springsure would have been somewhere in the vicinity of 1500 souls, well catered for by two trains weekly, as well as three general stores, two hotels, an inn, two cafes, butchers and bakery. There were also government offices, three churches, a convent and State School and a hospital. Today part of the original hospital building still remains and has been retained as a museum.

My parent's house in Springsure had a very big yard and we made good use of this land by growing vegetables. As my father was away working nearly all the time, my mother and I mostly tended the garden using water pumped from a well, driven by a hot air engine.

Every Saturday, I would go from door to door selling vegetables and I remember lettuce was 3d a head. I owned two goats, a working goat named Bluey and a racing one I named Black Joke. I had a harness for these two and entered Black Joke in the annual Springsure Shows where he won three or four ribbons and several trophies, including first prize of a harness set.

Paddy Gibney owned a hawkers cart which he pushed around selling goods such as drapery, stationery and so on. When he got too old to push the cart he decided to retire. He'd always left the cart at our place, often for two or three months at a time, so when he retired, he gave me his hawker's cart which I used to cart sand. Altogether I carted 50 loads of sand to spread under our house which was on high blocks.

I went to school at the Springsure State School and at age 11 or 12, I was still there when I took my first job at the telephone exchange as the 'night boy'. It meant that I slept over there and took all calls between the hours of 10 pm and 7 am.

When I was about 13 ½, I left school and went to work at Millthorpe, a sheep station west of Springsure where

my weekly wage was 12/8d a week. I was put off when I reached 18 years of age; I was told it was because the wage of 26/- was too much. My next job was at Nalcombie about 15 miles south of Springsure. This was a cattle property owned by Mr Eddie Gale and I was paid £2/10/- a week. I worked there for five and a half years. A mob of cattle was sold from Nalcombie to Mr George Horn at Rockfields at Calliope and I was sent by train with them and continued working at Rockfields for seven or eight weeks. One thing that amazed me at Rockfields was the water, because all the bores flowed on and the wells were five to six feet from the top.

There was a lot of lucerne grown on this property and I remember a big shed of lucerne hay there. When cattle were to go to the Gladstone Meatworks, I was sent with them and we stopped overnight at an old hotel between the crossroads and Gladstone itself. This was the Clyde Hotel which now stands at the historical village site at Calliope River.

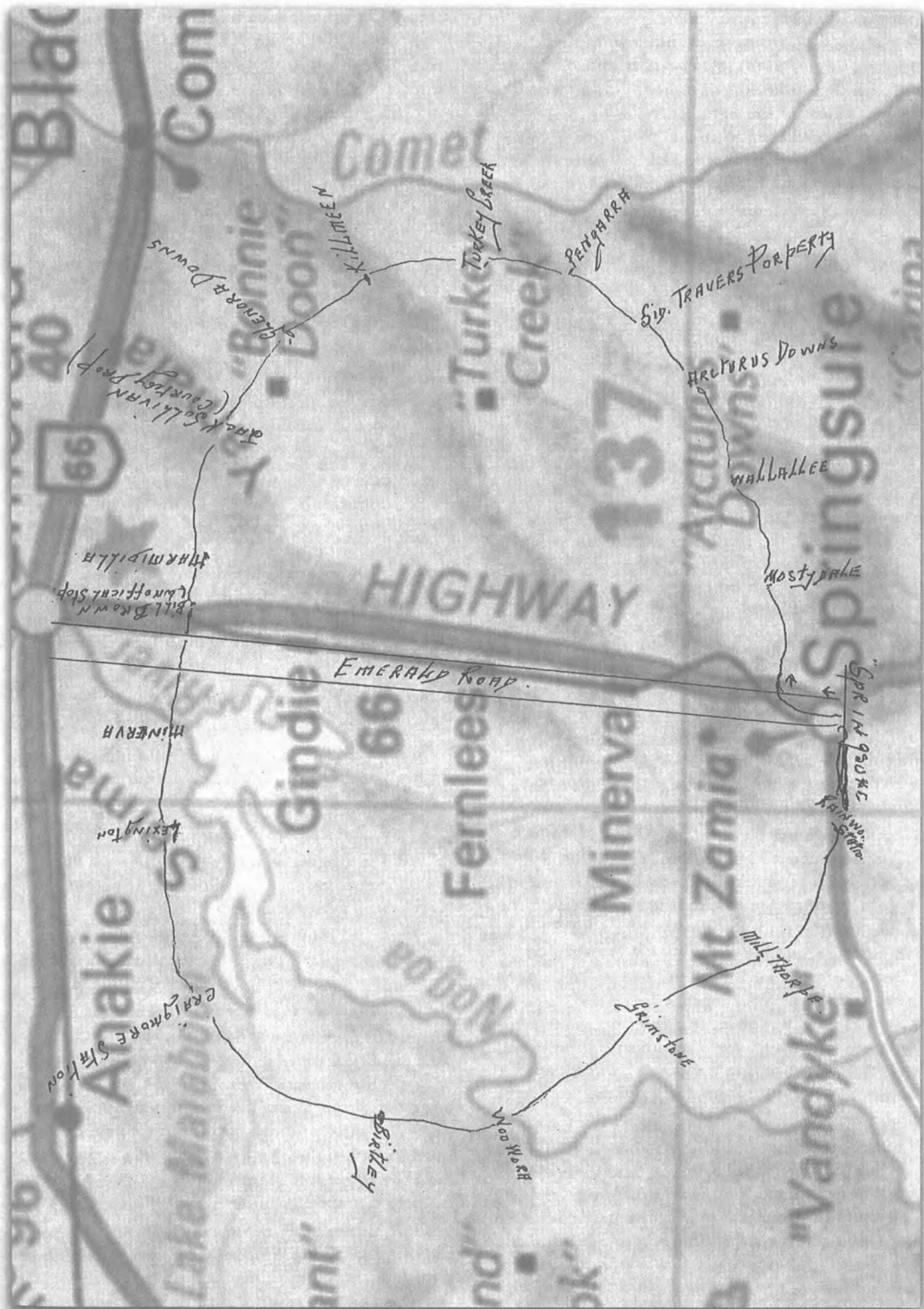
In 1939 I went back to Springsure and worked as offsider on a boring plant for Herb Biddulph for about three years. After 1942, well-boring became limited. Herb didn't require help any more and I needed to find other work.

Tenders were being called for the Craigmores-Birtley Mail Service as the owners were retiring. This was a packhorse mail run and my tender for £4/10/- a week was accepted. I bought four horses for riding and four as pack horses and set myself up with saddles and riding gear. I kept the horses in Charlie Hoffmeisters paddock near the racecourse at Springsure. I knew the district and its people well enough that I didn't think I needed to do a trial run with the previous contractor even though the service was a round trip of 112 miles. It began midday Saturday and ended midday Monday. I was right, because when I started, I had no problems.

If my memory serves me right, for four years or even a little longer, I combined two jobs; four days a week at E C Buddulphs and then the Graigmores-Birtley run.

The mail came by train from Emerald twice weekly, on Saturdays and Wednesdays. The line from Emerald to Springsure was a branch line. A distance of 42 miles took approximately three hours to travel and it was said travellers could leave the train, milk a cow grazing alongside the line, take the milk home for breakfast and come back to complete their journey!

Every Saturday morning I was up before 7 am when the horses would be in the yard. I would take a set of two and leave them to be shod at Tom McLaughlin's the



Bill's hand drawn mud map of the properties serviced by his mail run superimposed over a current map.

Blacksmith, while I sorted the mail at the post office. Tom charged 5/- per horse for this service. After sorting the mail, I would pack the horses. Each place of delivery had their own locked canvas mailbag for which both the post office and the customer retained separate keys. These bags would be packed into pack saddlebags in rotation, making easy access for delivery en-route. This done, I would leave Springsure at midday.

My first port of call was at Mostyndale for Noel Woolcock where the mailbox was at the roadside, then I travelled to Wallallee where a cup of tea was always made for me. Next was Arcturus Downs, a sheep station. Without fail, the old cook – Mrs Tanner always had a cup of tea ready for me. It was six miles from Arcturus Downs to Syd Travers' property Boongarra, which was just a drop and after that it was Pengarra, which was the first changing station for the horses. I always made sure I reached Pengarra by 6 pm before dark and the minute I walked up the steps, the evening meal was ready. The table would be set for dinner and there would be two lovely patty cakes especially for me. They were the nicest I've ever tasted. Mr Eddie Drummond, his wife and her sister were at Pengarra, where two of my horses were kept in a paddock.

In summertime I was always up at 4 am Sunday, to travel the seven miles with fresh horses to Turkey Creek, home of the Sullivan family. A dear old soul of 70 odd years always had breakfast ready for me there. Pat Sullivan at Kilmeen (brother to the Turkey Creek people) was the next drop and from Kilmeen it was off to Dennis Sullivan at Glenora Downs and then a courtesy mail drop for Jack Sullivan. Mr Nicholson, an amputee with one leg, was at Marmidilla. He was a returned serviceman from World War I.

Charlie Brown was the boundary rider at Marmidilla and as it was about 20 miles from Pengarra, he kept two spare horses on the property for my second changing station. He camped in the shed there and always had a good cup of tea ready for me. My Uncle Bill Brown, who was a returned soldier from WWI was also on Marmidilla where he camped in a tent with his dog and horse nearby. I always stopped to have a cup of tea with him. The water was boiled in a billy over an open fire and there was always a piece of damper cooked in hot coals and ash in a hole in the ground. Even though sometimes I really didn't need it, it was the best cup of tea on the trip.

The next mail drop was at Minerva Station for Tom Wills and this was where I had Sunday dinner at midday. Old Mrs Ambrey was the cook and she made the best plum puddings I have ever tasted. At shearing time when she was away on holidays, the shearers cook Neilsen, made lovely cream puffs for dinner. Colie Wills at Lexington was next and then another eight miles further on was Craigmores Station where Mr & Mrs Edmund Martin lived. I always arrived before dark and would leave two horses in their yard.

Lou Weston was the pump man at Craigmores, he

attended to the water windmills and so on and his wife was the cook. I would stay the night there and be up before daylight but Mrs Weston always made sure there was a cup of tea ready for me even at that hour. A cup of tea with Mike Biddulph at Birtley was next. I remember one very cold morning when I had chilblains on my fingers so bad I could have almost cried with the pain – it was agony.

I changed horses again at Tom Loina's place at Woowora, then it was on to Grimstone and Dick Kirby and Millthorpe and Alex Mills where I had a cup of tea before going on to Reg Braitling at Rainworth Station, a distance of six miles. One morning, I arrived there to find his car completely burnt out at the gate. He had been out the night before and had no idea of the fire or what could have caused it.

I never stopped for refreshments at Rainworth because it was time to head back to Springsure where I would arrive Monday at dinnertime.

First I would take the mail to the post office and then the two horses to the paddock. I'd reached the end of the mail run, but my work wasn't finished yet because I still had my gear to attend to. I always used 'coachline' grease, which was a little like Vaseline and kept the leather soft and in first class order. I would grease all my leathers, bridles, saddles, pack saddles and so on each time with this grease. Every week without fail, I washed my saddlecloths.

Someone had given me a recipe as a cure for horses with sore backs, saddle sores or even if the hair was missing. It was :

- Any piece of leather
- Fat with no salt in it
- Burn the leather until very dry, when it would crumble into tiny pieces.
- Put together with fat on stove and boil until it comes together like an ointment or cream.
- Rub into affected area
- Rest the horse for a week.

I found that even the hair grew back where it had come away and I was never without a jar of this mixture.

I never hobbled my horses and always made sure I attended to them first when I made a changeover. They were good loyal servants. In the cold weather, there was one chestnut mare I remember who would play up when I saddled her. She'd be restless until I was on her back and then she'd throw me off, but she never moved away, just waited there until I mounted her again and she'd be OK the second time. I paid £5/10/- for her, far more than the others, they only cost me £4 each.

I had the Birtley mail run for about four and a half years and then I sold it to Dick Marshall. Later on, this run was turned into a motorised one. In the time I had it, I was never held up by floods, nor did I experience any other problems so 'His Majesty's Mail' always got through!

The country I travelled through consisted mainly of creek flats, scrub and well-grassed plains. It was all good grazing country. The occasional snake would cross my



Bill Thomson and one of his 'loyal servants' circa 1942-45



path startling the horses but they would soon settle as we and the snake went our separate ways. I saw very few other travellers, only a stockman occasionally riding a property who would give me a wave. As I took short cut trails through the land, my riding and packhorses made their own pads like two wheel tracks from following the same route each week.

Fortunately, when I was contracted to do this run, the days of any fear of interruption to the safe delivery of 'His Majesty's Mail' were long gone. I always felt safe on my journey and in no need of any protection and I never carried a rifle or other firearm. Homes on properties were mainly low set timber with very little garden surrounds. Some larger properties had workmen's quarters separate from the main house, with workmen eating their meals in the kitchen of the main dwelling, but not with the family. Meals were of good wholesome food such as beef or mutton, served with vegetables for main meals and sausages and eggs for breakfast. In those days, lighting consisted of kerosene, carbide and gas lights with the odd home having their own generator, which provided 32-volt electricity.

From Tuesday to Friday, I worked at Biddulphs Store in Springsure and there were always 70 to 80 orders to be taken around. Joe McLaughlin did an order run on his bicycle, which he phoned through to the store. On Wednesdays and Thursdays there were goods and freight to be carted from the railway to the store. It was a busy working life.

During this time, I had met my future wife. Miss Winifred Creagh lived with her family who owned two sheep properties, Primrose Vale and Whitefield Park out off the Wealwandangie Road. We were married on 13 January 1943 and our little daughter Karen was born at Springsure on 9 October 1944. So now I was a married man with a young family and I had to provide for them.

Bill with his two daughters - Karen aged approx. 6 and Marlene who was 8 or 9 moths old at the time of the photograph. Taken while on holidays at the Creagh family property outside Springsure.

Bill and Win went on to have a second daughter some 6 years later. A report of the wedding of Winifred and William Thomson gives a great deal of detail about the happy day. It was celebrated at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church at Springsure and Winifred's dress was of ivory embossed satin with a long train, long sleeves and a small collar at the neckline with covered buttons and a waistband embroidered with silver thread. She wore a full-length embroidered veil and carried a trailing bouquet of white flowers. The gown had been purchased by mail order from McDonnell & East in Brisbane and proved to be a perfect fit for the bride. As it was wartime with clothes rationing in place, the veil was worn by seven other brides and the wedding gown by two other brides at their nuptials.

The report goes on to say that Miss Margaret Hennessy was bridesmaid and her frock, which had had to be made of pink silk net curtain fabric, was extremely pretty.

Despite rationing Winifred had a travelling frock in navy and white with a small white hat and it goes on to say that the bride's sister, made all the bridal trousseau of floral waterwave embossed curtain material.

Winifred's brother Jack Creagh home on leave from the army for the occasion, was best man.

As the mail contractor on the Craigmore-Birtley Service, I was considered not eligible for war service but now servicemen and women began returning from the hostilities of WWII and were justly given preference for jobs, which they had vacated. It was time for me to move on. I applied and was successful, for a position with the Emerald Co-operative. I had lived in the Springsure district all my life but now a new chapter was about to begin.



Win and Bill Thomson – 13 January 1943

Mrs Sheila Biddulph of Rockhampton recalls the years when Bill Thomson worked with her husband, Herb Biddulph...

My father was Dennis Sullivan of Glenora one of the stations where Bill dropped mail when he had the Birtley mail run. Bill worked with my late husband Herb on the boring plant and they camped out when working. We owned an American caravan, which had polished wood. At first there was only a camp oven but later on, the men had a tent fly and there was a stove out there.

I was not at the camp all the time. The dingoes howling at night really worried me and sometimes there would be itchy grubs (something like caterpillars) everywhere and I really hated them.

So, after a while we had a house in Springsure where I stayed and I would go out to the men. I had two children by then and I would bake biscuits and so on in town and take them out to the men in tins. I remember Bill would look after my little daughter while I cooked the evening meal.

One night we had some lovely chops. I said 'What delicious chops, the lamb was lovely'. Then I was told it was goat, not lamb! Once we were caught in a flood at Rolleston with the water up to the horse's bellies. I had some tinned meat and we were grateful to have that to eat.

Sometimes at night we would listen to the cricket when the Aussies played in England and there we'd be, out in the

Australian bush, eating pies with peas at midnight while listening to the cricket. I was mad on crosswords and every week would buy the English Women's Weekly which had a crossword. I'd be there at night doing crosswords and asking the men what such and such a word should be and then I'd write it in by torchlight. Once I remember making a lemon jelly tart in the camp oven. How? That was my secret.

Bill was courting Win Creagh and sometimes we'd take him out to her family property where we'd always have a cup of tea. I remember their wedding with the reception at Bougas Café, which was later burnt down, and how I wanted my husband Herb to make a speech, but he wouldn't. I felt like standing up saying something myself, but in those days it was always the men who made the speeches.

The custom at Springsure in those days was for the bridal couple to leave by train for their honeymoon. Everyone in town would arrive at the railway station with confetti and throw it all over the bride and groom and there'd be confetti everywhere.

Once, when Bill was working at the store he came around with the grocery order. My little girl Denise had cut her finger and it was bleeding badly and I kept fainting at the sight. I said to Bill 'Quick, scoot over and get Auntie Dolly Alchin' and off he went in double quick time.

I recall one time out at the camp with the men; there was a bushfire up on a ridge. I had a white damask tablecloth on the table and the black cinders from the fire began to land on my precious cloth. All I could think about was saving my tablecloth. Imagine having a white damask cloth on a table out in the bush! We had good times and I often look back and remember them.

Bill remembers the grubs Sheila speaks of; they were brown and bred in the cedar trees. He recalls tying corn sacks around the bottoms of the tree trunks to stop the grubs coming down onto the ground. He laughs about the honeymooners leaving by train – their departure made all the more spectacular because small detonators would have been spaced along the railway line so that as the wheels ran over them, their explosions added to the occasion.

After Bill's move to the Emerald Cooperative where he stayed almost two years, he went on from strength to strength. He worked for Tom Dawson in his grocery business for a time then became the manager of Denham Brothers in their first ever retail outlet at Theodore. With that experience under his belt, he went back to Tom Dawson and they began a partnership through until the premises were destroyed by fire in 1965. Then followed a newsagency at Thangool. After retiring for a few weeks in 1977 he went on to become the purchasing officer for Agricultural Requirements in Biloela, finally officially retiring eight and a half years later aged sixty-eight and a half. Bill and Win have been married for 61 years. She is now 80 and Bill turns 87 in June 2004. They live in retirement in their home in Biloela where a cuppa and some home baked goodies are always on offer, along with a stroll in Bill's bush garden which he is justly proud of.

Life was Simpler Then

By Rosa Bendall

Edited from an oral tape, notes and conversations.

I have always considered Rockhampton home despite a few periods of living away in Townsville and Ipswich, Canberra and a little place called Fernlees.



My maternal grandmother Anna Rosa Sawle. She passed away in 1898 aged 35 years when my mother was only eight years old. I was named after her.



My mother's parents whose names were Sawle and Allen, settled here after coming from Cornwall and Stratford in England and my Grandpa Cowie, my father's father, came from Scotland. I was the third eldest in the Cowie family of nine children – four boys and five girls. My sister Hilda and I shared the same birthday five years apart and we always celebrated it together.

I was five years of age when the 1914 – 18 war ended and remember our neighbour's son returning home and giving my mother a silver leaf from France as a souvenir of the war.

1918 saw a big flood which reached up to Kent Street. We lived in Denison Lane and the waters reached up to the verandah edge of our low blocked house. McLaughlin's Brewery once stood where the current post office is on the edge of the City Centre and I have a photo of boats floating in front of it during the flood.

I also remember the big flu epidemic. The family all contracted it and the Red Cross visited and provided care and food to all who were suffering from the flu. They were wonderful and everyone appreciated the assistance they gave.

Sunday evenings, Dad would take us to the old post office corner to listen to the Salvation Army Service and the band playing; many other folk did the same.

There was a children's hospital on the corner of Agnes and Denham Streets over from the Girls Grammar School and also an orphanage there. I had my tonsils removed at that Hospital. The Fire Brigade which was horse drawn, was on the corner of Bolsover and Fitzroy Streets. Where the Fire Brigade now stands was an open flat where we were allowed to play.

Mother told me that to get to the other side of the city, they crossed the river by boat and there were bus services to most suburbs. Hopkins – Yaamba Road, Johnstone Bros service to Lakes Creek, McBeans to Park Avenue, Byrnes to Depot Hill and Wandal. There were the Hansom Cabs, the trams and also a tram/train service which ran from Lakes Creek Station to Stanley Street for which the fare was 4d for most trips. You also had night busses, which meant you could catch a bus home after attending movies etc. It cost less to attend the theatre and you got more for your money then.

My grandfather used to take me to watch the Wintergarden Theatre being built. In later years my sister Frances and her boyfriend and Charlie and I during our courting years, had a permanent booking for Wednesday and Saturday nights. When we were growing up as a family, we went to the Earl's Court where the lady in the ticket box was Daisy Phillips and her father Ike and her

Dad – Herbert Percival Cowie, Francis, me at approximately two years, Mum – Ada Francis and Eric seated.



McLaughlin's Brewery During the 1918 flood. Martin Hansen, arms folded wearing the boater in centre, was Charles' uncle. Note the 'lads' to his left – having a beer.

brother Albert worked there. J C Williamson's plays and noted singers would come and perform at carnival time and shows such as George Sorlie's would come to Rocky As we got older, we were allowed to use face powder but not rouge but our friends told us to rub beetroot on, which did the job. Ashes of roses was a favourite cosmetic. I was 14 when I left school having been a pupil at North Rockhampton, Berserker, Central Infants, and Central Girls' Schools. I think I must have been a bit

of a tomboy because I liked playing football and marbles with the boys. As was pretty much the norm in that era for girls, I did not really continue any academic study beyond primary school, although I did do some domestic studies at secondary school. I was born in 1913 so by the time I left school, the depression was just starting to be felt and it was pretty essential that I go out to work to help the family. The depression made a big difference to a lot of families.



Central Infants – My first school. I am standing second from the left in the second back row.



Central Girls School circa 1922. Second from right at back wearing my black cat necklace – me aged seven or eight. Beside me, extreme right end – Marie Church and in the middle of the back row in checks – Kathy Ivers.



North Rockhampton School circa 1924. I am seated, extreme right wearing checks, aged approx 11.

Front row l to r Jean Golightly, Bonnie Usher, Isobel Harrison, Bessie Jenkins, Irene Crane, Ethel Buxton,.....Watkins. Right behind me is Alma Horne. Other names I remember – Jenkins, Woods, Goltz, Hallet, Nix, Norris, Phillips and Barnes.



Central Girls School Honour Certificate. Issued to Rosie Cowie for coming second in the first half year with 74 percent. Dated December 1921 and signed by the Acting Head Teacher, A Alley.

My father worked at Lakes Creek but when the depression really hit he, along with a lot of others did not keep his job. I think he got about three months work at the Creek but apart from that he would go out to the sugar farms or help with carpentry or whatever he could get. We were a big family but we seemed to manage. We never went hungry even if we did occasionally eat bread and dripping. Everyone was a lot more self sufficient in those days and we had a big vegetable garden which kept us going.

Everybody in town seemed to have goats. Sometimes people kept them for milk or meat but goat racing was a very popular form of entertainment. We had a couple of male goats and they were pets but we raced them. Our house was not low set, it was raised up but only a little, and one of the goats would get up to the windows and eat anything he could reach through the windows – the curtains and everything. As kids we'd sing to him 'Sam, Sam, the dirty old man' and he used to go for us. It was great fun.

When I left school, I went to work looking after children. At the first job I looked after one little girl and my next job was with the manager of the Commonwealth Bank. He and his wife had two girls and I lived in with them. It wasn't because the mother

was away at work because she was at home; it was just normal to have help in the house if you could afford it I suppose. As well as helping with the girls I did a little bit of housework but not much, because there was another lady who came in to do that and the washing and ironing etc.



Husband Charles (a teetotaler) at a family wedding.

I met my husband Thomas Charles, whose nickname was 'Chook', at the pictures. It was at the Tivoli theatre which was on the corner of Bolsover and Fitzroy next to where the Military Museum is now. The Liberty Theatre was where my husband and I went to see George Wallace in *Gone To The Dogs* on 3 September 1939 and war was declared that night while we were in there. Sir Robert Menzies was the Prime Minister at the time and of course we all stood up and sang the *National Anthem*.

Another favourite place to go was the Coliseum Roller Skating Rink, which was where the pathology place is now on the corner of East and Archer Streets, opposite Anzac House. As well as enjoying skating ourselves, they would occasionally have visiting shows come to town to perform there and I remember one time during the depression we went along to watch one of these shows and there was only Charlie and myself and two others in the audience. They put on the whole show for us, and it was grand. There was another theatre, which I think was called the Theatre Royal and I'm a little hazy about its exact location except that it was upstairs in East Street. Charlie's family was from Mt Morgan where his father worked in the mine. When it closed in 1925, they all came to Rockhampton.



Football Club picnic at Keppel Sands in 1929.

*Back l to r. Joey Bargeson, unknown, unknown, Miriam Neil
Front l to r. Ethel Buxton, Johnny Magee, Me, Charlie.*

We were married four years after meeting. We lived with his mother when we were first married and then we bought the house I still live in, 69 years ago. We had six children over a period of 13 years – Neville who now lives in Sydney, Keith, Dawn, Pat, Roy who is in Canberra and Trevor, now in Townsville.

Hubby was keen to get back on the railway and the only way he could do that was to 'go on the links' laying tracks and he went to a place called Talarino Station between Alpha and Beta. Charlie didn't want me to go out there because he had only been supplied a double tent, but after he finished there we both went to a place called Fernlees between Emerald and Springsure. It's right near where Lake Maraboon and the Emerald Dam are now, but they didn't exist then. I was the non-official post-mistress there and because of that, we got a house to live in where the other workers that came out only had the galvanised huts to live in. The Cullin-la-ringo station was the only telephone subscriber at the post office, but it kept me busy. Fernlees had two trains a week coming through from Emerald to Springsure. We were out there in 1933 and came back in about 1935 because our eldest boy was just about ready for school.

We settled in to our home at Wandal right over the road from the original airport site which is where the aero club operates now. We did not have electricity then and galvanised iron tubs to wash in. Even though I thought it was Christmas when I got my copper, laundry day was still quite a production with the old wood copper having to be fired up. Of course we didn't have Hills Hoists to hang the washing on, only wire lines strung up between two posts. Charlie always helped with the washing and there was plenty with our family. He would take it in and always folded it. He would joke that even when he was working away, he'd need to come back and get the washing in because I'd forget to do it.



The Ridglands School circa 1890's showing my mother-in-law Joanna Hansen third from right at back in the dark dress. She was the sister of Martin Hansen who appears in the McLaughlin's Flood photograph. We were very good friends.



The Labour Band taken outside the Westwood Sanatorium where they played on Sunday afternoons. Charlie, kneeling front left, was on the Hospital Board and played the drums.

We bought our kerosene in tins because we used it in our lamps. Charlie made a wash-up dish from an empty tin by cutting it diagonally and putting a wooden frame around it. He made me my first sandwich cake tins too, they had fluted edges and were used for many years and folk would ask where I got them. Charlie was a very handy man, the chairs he made are still in use in the dining room.

In the front of our house, down around the corner and down Western Street in front of what is now the Army Depot, was really just a swamp. There was just a goat track along there where the children walked to Crescent Lagoon School. In the rainy season they had to go up the hill to get to school. One of their favourite pastimes

especially in the rainy season was catching crawchies, and they caught plenty!

When my children first began there around 70 years ago, Crescent Lagoon was only a two-room school with a fold-back wall for occasions like their fancy dress dances. They had multi-aged classes and the Head teacher taught. All six of the children went to Crescent Lagoon. Later on, all six of them went to Rocky High at the Bolsover Street premises and they were featured in an article in *The Morning Bulletin* celebrating the 75th Jubilee of the school in 1994.

We had our own substantial vegie garden out the back and we always had plenty of fresh vegies for our neighbours and ourselves. Sometimes we had more than

we could give away and rosella's – we'd give them away by the bucketful! I really enjoyed working in the garden. As a family, we would go to the Gem Theatre in Wandal Road with the kids usually on a Wednesday and Saturday. The Gem was in the little Wandal shopping area over where the post office is. Mars Bars were the favourite snack, but occasionally we'd treat ourselves to a pie there. They were real pies and tasted beautiful.



My children, taken on the occasion of my 90th Birthday.

l. to r. Roy, Dawn, Trevor standing behind me, Pat, Neville and Keith.

Wandal Road was full of shops and was a busy little shopping centre. O'Brien's Drapery was in front of his house. There was a dress shop, then the post office then a grocery shop on the corner of Wilkinson St and Wandal Road. I walked up to the shops regularly and during the war years when the soldiers were around, for some reason they would throw pennies around, and there'd be all these penny pieces on the ground.

The City Centre was very different too. I remember A W Kirby who had a drapery downstairs where I used to buy the boy's suits and upstairs was a lovely restaurant where they served beautiful sponges. A W Kirby's became Penny's Store which much later became Coles. James Stewarts was then a thriving business with various departments in other locations. Across the lane from the current store they had their carpet, lino and manchester departments and upstairs was the furniture factory, tailoring and dressmaking rooms.

As well, there was Edgar's Jewelry Store, Greshams Dress Shop, Vogue Dress Shop, Davis Groceries, Brightways, Williams Hardware and Manchester store near William and East Streets, Orion Café, Fitzmeirs, Withers Jewelry. Our favourite hat shop, Mrs Hurley's was in Churches Building and there were Clarkes the tailors and HARRISES and many more who are now long gone.

Grandpa Cowie had a bookshop in town. It was first called Cowie, Cowland, then Munro and Cowie, then just Munro's, which now operates from the top end of East Street. It was originally a big shop down near where the Kern Arcade is now.

I've always been known as a pretty good cook and for many years had always cooked on a wood fire stove but eventually, we got a new electric oven. Saturday was always baking day and one Saturday just after we got it, I was cooking up some beetroot from the garden. I had worked out that if I brought them up to the boil and then just turned them off, they would finish off cooking by themselves on the solid plates. Off we went to the Gem and when we came home Hubby went and unlocked the back door to let us in and, amongst other things, he said 'It's lucky you've got a (**/<!!**) house to come home to.' I had forgotten to turn the stove off! It was fortunate there was no window open to create a breeze.

Life was simpler then and I was always a happy person who would whistle and sing around the house. Penny's in East Street sold both groceries and variety and they'd send their order man out and you'd get your groceries delivered, always to the back door. There was never an additional charge for that service. The milkman would come and fill up the billy we left hanging on a hook for him and the egg and butter man also delivered. Ewing's delivered the bread. Meat was delivered and the ice was delivered for the ice chest. The kids loved getting a piece of ice from the iceman.

Highlights of the year were birthdays and Christmas and Showtime was much anticipated and was when everyone got their new clothes, new shoes, new hats etc.



From The Morning Bulletin. Showing off our new clothes at the Show.

Everybody did their own sewing and baking and I still enjoy doing fancy work and cooking. Hubby was good at sewing too and he and I used to both sit and do fancy work. I recall once I had this beautiful back crepe dress to go to the Carnival Races and his cousin at Stewarts said it would look really good with black bugle beads on it. I gave up because I couldn't see any more so Hubby did most of the beading. He sat up 'til 12 o'clock at night to put them on. His mother, uncle and sister were all tailors and one of his aunties was a first class dressmaker, so it was in his family. He'd do any repairs that were needed. Charlie and I loved the races, we'd go every Saturday with his sister and then I'd usually go again to the mid-week meeting.



A day at the races circa 1957 wearing an outfit from Vogue Salon.



The Hyacinth in full bloom. The view the Queen had of the swamp. (Garland Park)

Our first car had been a Chevrolet with a dickey-seat in the back. It had belonged to one of the doctors here and we bought it. Charlie turned it into a Ute with a fairly large tray on the back. At Sunday School picnic time he used to take it to the station and bring everybody home and we'd have over 20 in it. It's a wonder we never got caught. I don't think they have those picnics any more. Emu Park by train was the favourite place to go; they were great fun.

The war years didn't have a really big impact on our everyday lives. Hubby was keen to join the air force but because he worked for the railway he was considered essential services. Because the airport was just across the road from our house, the planes used to come across almost on top of us and the air force men would wave to the kids out of the plane. Charlie was out of town working a lot and because we were so close to the airport, my in-laws insisted we move up to family at Struck Oil, so off we went taking our racing dogs with us. The dingoes would come down to the dogs at night and I'd have to go out to send them away. We didn't stay long, it wasn't a good mix with kids and older people and daughter Dawn was unhappy without her cot so we only stayed about six weeks and then came back home. Hubby used to ride his bike up and down to Mt Morgan to see us while we were there.

So back we came and we had a shelter in the back yard; it was dug down into the ground and then had a tin roof. One night the alert went. It was given by the local wardens with a hand wound siren. My cousin who lived at the back of us was one of the wardens. I was here on my own with the children and the second eldest son Keith had an old Lucy Gray kerosene lantern which he lit so we could see where we were going. Anyway, down comes Bert being a strict warden and he really yelled at us 'Put out that light!' The next morning he came and apologised 'I didn't realise Chook was away, I should have been helping you instead of yelling at you.' We did put

up with quite a bit during the war, but we survived.

There always seemed to be something on in town while the troops were here. There were Quay Street festivals and parades a bit like Mardi Gras Carnival along the riverbank. We used to go and watch aeroplanes and we'd always get a wave. There were troops camped around the airport and at Archer Street at the Drill Hall. There was a lot of activity there. Before the war years when I was young, they used to have the Digger's Carnival every year at the Drill Hall; there were ham wheels, stalls and everything.

We had friends with whom we alternated visits and it was 15 August and it was their turn to have us at their place on the day peace was declared. We went over and told them we weren't coming because we were going in to the Mardi Gras celebrations in town. There were people everywhere.

During the floods in the 50's when the town was cut off by road and rail, they did big drop-offs by air over in the paddock beside the old airport. They would drop off these great big bundles wrapped up in huge dark tarpaulins and the planes didn't land, they would just fly over low and drop all the food parcels. The children loved watching that happen.

When the Queen and Prince Phillip came in 1954 it was just after the floods and the swamp in front of our house (now called Garland Park) which is bordered on one side by Wandal Road, looked a picture, blanketed in lilac-colored water hyacinth. They landed at the old airport and then went into town along Wandal Road. They took them via the reservoir on the Athelstane Range and Hubby was up at the seat at the top and got a wave from Phillip. I was lucky enough to be invited to be on the dais at the Town Hall.

I was President of the Guides Local Association at the time. I had been involved with Sea Rangers, Land Rangers, Cubs, Rovers, Scouts and Guides for a number of years as all six children became one or the other. It

certainly kept me busy for a number of years. The Scouts and Guides were involved in the Queen's arrival at the airport and we just left the house open for them to use. She didn't stay for morning tea after the official ceremonies in town but we had it without her.

The children had all moved away from home when Charlie was transferred to Townville in 1963. We were there for a time, came home and then transferred to Ipswich in 1969. I joined the Ipswich Croquet Club while we were there. Through the mid-70s I spent just about all of six years in Canberra with our son and two of our grandchildren who were only six and seven when their mother passed away.

Charlie and I enjoyed a Women's Weekly round the world tour in 1976 when he retired after 49 years with Queensland Rail. We travelled on the Arcadia and were away from 3 February – 20 June. We saw quite a bit, it was great.

I've been widowed for 27 years; Charlie was only 66 when he passed away. We were in Canberra with our sick daughter-in-law when he suffered a heart attack; it was a difficult time because he passed away in the October and our daughter-in-law passed away in the December.

I keep myself busy; I've always considered myself fortunate to have had mostly good health apart from suffering severe migraines for many years and despite having a knee replacement last year I'm doing well although still a bit restricted. I love reading, enjoy the theatre, my handwork and my involvement with my Church at Jardine Street Uniting.

The family arranged a wonderful celebration for my 90th birthday. All the families were there. There were bagpipes, the highland fling, a cornet and piano and *The Morning Bulletin* wrote a story and printed a picture of us all. My family is quite large now – my six children have given me 19 grandchildren (two deceased) and 21 great grandchildren.

At our suggestion, Rosa made a list of all the business she could recall that made up the busy centre of town, which was the hub of Rockhampton in the 1920s. Her recollections are :

East Street, from Fitzroy Street to William Street on the left hand side :

Fruit shop
Mrs Herley's Hat Store
A Clarke, Tailors
James Millroy and Co. (The home of a million gifts)
Busy Bee Café
Blue Bird Café
Martins (with 4RO upstairs)
Harris Drapery
Heisers Jewellers
Embassy Hotel
Arcade with dentist, podiatrist, watchmaker and others.
Fruit shop
Vises Tobacconist and Casket Shop (Vises for prizes)
The Oxford Hotel
Bank
Edgar's Jewellery Shop (Edgar's Treasure House)

Viv Gormans Shoe Shop
Watleys Cake Shop
Palace Hotel
Sydney Cash Drapers (Catips)
Miss Greddens Frock Shop
The Vogue Salon, the Miss Catips.
Kodaks
R Davis
Brightways
Orion Café
Peels Jewellers
Williams Hardware, Furniture and Manchester
Government Buildings
Malvern Star Bike Shop
Bank.
East Street from Fitzroy to William Street on the right hand side.
State Government Insurance Office
Queensland Tourist Bureau
Lands Department
Court House
Commonwealth Bank
Telephone building
Post Office (the Robert Hartley memorial was originally here)
James Stewart and Co
Silk Store
Withers Jewellery Store
Metsyers Casket Shop
A W Kirby's Drapers
Fitzmeirs Tailor and Shoe Shop
Munro's Booksellers and Music Shop
J A Lucas Shoe Shop
E G Lucas Drapers
Sydney Banking
Grant and Simpson's
A small alley leading up to Irvine's Photo Shop and Charlie Kerr the Dentist
Cook's Hat Store
Bremmers Drapers
Heilbrons Drapers
Rickets Cake Shop and Café
Dolph Symonds Chemist
City Arcade
Newsagency
Union Hotel
In the Arcade near William Street there was the hotel bottle shop, hairdressing salon, a florist, a hat store and a barber shop.
Across from the hotel was E N Symonds Chemist.

Life on the Railway Track

By Beryl and Eric Schneider

As part of Down Memory Lane Book I, Beryl and Eric included a three page edited story taken from a taped conversation of some of their recollections from the early days of their marriage and life lived to a large extent, alongside the railway track. Their family had been urging them to record some of this information and we're pleased to say the story 'I'd Rather Have Worked on the Land', was the catalyst for them to begin a 'proper' version of events. Their 'notes' currently total some 20 pages or more in what is a continuing 'work in progress'. The following excerpts give a clear picture of their rail life from the late 50s.

I first joined the railway in June 1954 and stayed with them through to my retirement in 1996, a period in excess of 41 years. The first almost four years of this time were spent in the Traffic Branch and the remaining 37 plus years provided me with a wide and varied range of activity and experience in the maintenance and construction of railway track. During the latter years of employment, I was primarily involved in training, testing, and qualifying personnel for the different levels of employment in track maintenance, as well as carrying out track inspections and audits of track maintenance systems and procedures throughout Queensland.

After beginning as a temporary porter at Springsure, I worked as a porter, a number taker and shunter at Emerald, before a short stay with Maintenance Branch in a French drainage gang at Ambrose and then I was placed in a relay gang working at Archer.

The relay gang consisted of one ganger, one leading-hand, between 20 and 30 labourers and two nippers and was supported by a thermit welding gang of five men to weld standard 40 foot lengths of railway line into 200 foot lengths on site, ahead of the relaying work.

The Relaying ganger was responsible for planning, organising and controlling the daily work routine, recording and reporting, compiling timesheets, sometimes paying the men, safety of men and travelling trains, order of materials, maintaining discipline and harmony and keeping updated on current rules and regulations.

The leading hand assisted the ganger and the labourers were assigned tasks most suited to their ability. The nippers job was to keep water available throughout the work area, boil the water and make tea for smokes and lunch and to help to maintain and control tools. They were also expected to learn to use the tools and learn the various aspects of the work as they progressed.

This gang was equipped with all necessary hand tools for laying and surfacing railway track, one Fordson tractor with mounted compressor for operating air tools, a trailer used mainly for transporting tools and equipment required with the tractor, manually operated Pump cars for travel to and from the work-site, flattop trolleys for conveying tools and materials as necessary, tent fly's for shelter during the lunch hour, roadside water tanks, water drums and water bags.

Bondwood hut accommodation together with basic cooking utensils, was provided for gang members and a nightly camp allowance was paid to ensure that men could be at work each day. Each bondwood hut was equipped with two camp stretchers with mattresses and

pillows, a small fold-up table, two stools and a metal gauze-sided food safe. The bondwood huts were erected in pairs, facing each other with a tent fly covering the section between the huts. A galley was provided to the side of this covered section and equipped with a wood burning stove to enable the men to cook their meals while in camp. These stoves were generally rejects from stationmasters residences and often had defective ovens but were suitable for cooking on top.

The Ganger in Charge was provided with two huts; one as accommodation and the other as his office. He lived in this accommodation with his wife. One other man lived on-site with his wife but he was provided with only one hut and galley. These married quarters were set up away from the men's accommodation. For a time I camped in the camp accommodation during the week while the family stayed with my parents but soon found rental accommodation close enough to travel to and from work daily.

The relaying to be done on the Bajool/Archer section was soon completed and the gang then moved to Epala to commence relaying from the point depicting the northern boundary of the Ambrose fettling gang section and working south towards Mt Larcom. The family moved to another rental situation and then later bought an old disused farm which had not been worked for many years and had nothing on it but an old neglected house with one rainwater tank, remnants of an outhouse, a barely usable chook pen, a fallen-in well with collapsed windmill, broken down fences and with lots of undergrowth and rubbish and very little grass. It was very hilly and stony country; some of which, in years gone by, had been used for fruit growing. We bought this place as a home only with no intention of developing it into productivity. This old place remained our home and main base until we moved to Rockhampton in 1973.

Camp conditions at Epala were similar to those at Archer. It was a passing loop only with one house for the stationmistress and nothing else. The relaying work carried out on this section was similar to the work on the Archer - Bajool section except that rails were no longer Thermit welded into 200 ft lengths on-site but were flash butt welded in a depot at Banyo and delivered by train. Another change was that previously all sleeper boring was done by air operated boring head driven by the compressor on the tractor and now, the tractor was used to operate air operated tampers for tamping ballast under track at bridge ends and level crossings etc so the sleeper boring had to be done with hand operated augers.

It was at about this time, through a series of staff changes, that I accepted the position of leading hand.

Work progressed and it was then a move to Ambrose with the attendant organisation needed to dismantle and then re-erect the huts at their new site. Ambrose was a small railway siding with a stationmistress/postmistress in residence. The village comprised a primary school, grocery store, butcher shop, lime quarry, service station, public hall and about ten to fifteen homes. Our home was approx five miles west of Ambrose so I travelled to work daily.

My experience increased and the railway engineering staff at Rockhampton gave me great assistance to develop my knowledge of track standards. My ganger 'Chum' and I always got along well together and we would debate work matters and how we could improve our performance very strongly in his office and then no matter whether we agreed or not, we would depart friends. Eventually, 'Chum' accepted work elsewhere and after a few weeks of assessment at Wycarbah, I returned to take over as the ganger in charge. This is when my family first began their life along the line.

So, in the second half of 1960, we moved into the railway huts that Chum had occupied with his family so that I was on hand during the week. Weekends we went home to the farm. The family at that time was myself, wife Beryl, Ian aged four, Susan aged two and Kevin who was a few months old. As well, we had our dog Lassie who we took for company and protection for the children. Lassie killed any snakes that she found so we felt she would keep the children safe from snakes but unfortunately after a short time Lassie began running out to cars so she had to be left behind with my parents. We were close to the road as well as the rail with trains going past very close so Beryl needed to be alert at all times.

Living and keeping house in the confined space of these railway huts was at the least, a challenge for Beryl and also the children. In the hut used as our bedroom we had two camp stretchers for us to sleep, a cot for Kevin, a small table, a stool and our suitcases with clothes. The other hut had two camp stretchers for Ian and Susan, a zippered plastic hanging wardrobe for hanging clothes and a box with the children's toys.

The area between the huts was covered and closed in with a tent fly and it had portable timber flooring sections with a galley to one side. We furnished this area with a small upright tin cooler type safe that had water holding facilities top and bottom with cloth between to provide a cooling effect, a hanging safe for food supplies and table and stools for dining. In the galley was a wood burning stove, wood storage and a hand basin. Lighting provided was one hurricane lantern per hut with kerosene supplied.

Our toilet and shower facilities were two separate portable galvanised iron structures near by. The toilet was a pan system. The shower was a portable bucket shower with a draw lever and rope to release water as required. If you wanted hot water it had to be heated on

the stove or in the copper boiler.

Unfortunately the ground near one of our huts at Ambrose was infested with fleas to which Susan had an allergic reaction. Chemical treatment got rid of the fleas and we followed up with detergent water from washing which helped lay the dust as well as keep the fleas away. Water was supplied by train to roadside tanks and had to be carried to the huts and washing was done in a copper boiler. If Beryl needed to get to Rockhampton to visit the doctor or for any other reason, she would catch the rail motor in the morning and spend the day in town, coming back by rail motor in the afternoon – a long day with small children.

From Ambrose, we moved to Raglan where a friendship that lasts until today was formed with Bill and Shirley. Bill was a fettler who, like me was away all day and Shirley and Beryl kept each other company. At Raglan, the Raglan Creek was a harbour for sandflies. They affected our little girl Susan badly and after many trips to the doctor and various lotions and creams, we just bandaged her legs and kept her covered as much as possible. We were only at Raglan for a matter of months when the relay closed because of a shortage of funds for the work so we moved back to our farm and I worked at Ambrose for a time. October 1962 I agreed to relieve for eight weeks in a relay gang camped at Stanwell and working toward Kabra.

Kathryn had been born in 1961 and we were expecting another baby so to make this camp a little more homely, we loaded a double bed, a couple of cupboards, a few wooden chairs and other items in our old Austin A70 utility and delivered them to the campsite. That evening on the way back to Ambrose, I noticed something wrong under the front. In the torchlight I found the right hand front wishbone was broken off the chassis. I walked to Breakspear's farm to get some wire to tie it up to get home.



The family plus car at Gogango

The eight weeks turned into four years which involved several shifts and took us as far west as Edungalba. At Stanwell we quickly settled down to camp life and were made feel welcome by the gang members and the immediate surrounding community. The men would often talk to the children and Beryl. A couple of the men even shared some of their cooking tips with her.

We got fresh cow's milk daily from a chap with a house cow as well as fresh farm eggs and some of the men in the gang brought us a block of ice each day. Some of the men in camp played cards and occasionally we invited them to our camp for a social game after tea.

Our weekends were always busy doing our shopping in Rockhampton as well as the usual washing, ironing and baking etc to take us through the next week and then late Sunday afternoon we'd head back again.

Our youngest daughter Helen was born in Rockhampton on 14 January 1963 and while Beryl was in hospital, the daughter of one of the gang members would come with her father when he came to work, stay with the children during the day and then go back home with her father in the afternoon.

The gang shifted camp to Westwood where shortly before shifting to Gogango we got a new stove, which allowed us to bake properly during the week, meaning one less job on the weekend. There was also a butcher shop giving us fresh meat every day. Then Gogango and two great improvements to our living conditions, we were able to run a garden hose from the water tank to our hut, saving me the task of carrying water and we purchased a second hand Simpson washing machine, powered by a small petrol driven Villiers engine – another chore went off the weekend list.



Behind the huts at Gogango – the family

At Gogango, the children had company as the station Mistress had grandchildren about the same ages as ours and Beryl got to know a few more people so it was a pleasant time for her.

Late in 1964, when we returned to camp after a weekend home on the farm we discovered our huts had been blown about by a big storm. All beds were wet, crockery broken and it was a general mess. A night in the car was the only answer and we spent all the next day cleaning up. From here work took us to Ambrose for a month and then back to Gogango again. As the job progressed we moved to Edungalba. Shortly before the completion of this section of relay and our subsequent shift to Edungalba, we experienced a derailment. This occurred in the summertime while we were renewing and re-spacing sleepers on a section of curved track approaching

a rail bridge which went over a local roadway. I checked the work that had been done and deemed it safe before instructing the driver to proceed slowly, which he did. The loco and a few wagons went over and then the rails seemed to move a bit and one wheel went down on the inside of the rail and by the time the driver stopped – probably only a couple of short seconds – a loaded fuel tanker, a few empty stock wagons and an FJS wagon of drums of fuel had rolled over and slid part way down the embankment. The fuel tanker came to rest not far from our billy-fire and one of the men had the presence of mind to extinguish the fire immediately. This incident necessitated crews working well into the night to clear the line and restore it to a trafficable condition.

Edungalba consisted of a passing loop, a cattle yard siding, a railway station, the stationmistress's residence, the gang trolley shed, a fettler's residence and a school with an adjacent residence. The nearest store, butcher shop and hotel were at Duaringa. Some of the men got their supplies from there but we continued to do our shopping in Rockhampton on a Saturday on the way home to our farmhouse.

Camp amenities had been upgraded to include two refrigerators for the men. It was inadequate for in excess of twenty men so they had to manage as best they could. We had our own fridge and meat and bread etc. came from Gogango on the shunt train (10 up) and Beryl would meet the train, collect everyone's perishables and try and fit them in the refrigerators.

The winter of 1965 was particularly cold and I can recall wearing an old ex-army great coat all day at work. The kids went to school rugged up as much as possible and Beryl tried to cope with keeping warm in the bondwood huts. '65 was also a very severe drought and I spent most of my weekends helping my dad and mum with their farm, leaving Beryl and the kids to do all the chores at home and me so tired that Beryl did virtually all the driving back to camp.

Toward the end of four years, we shifted to Gracemere for a time and the children would say that their highlight here was the arrival of Mr Whippy one evening a week when dinner had to be over, ready for the icecream to be enjoyed.

We experienced a total of about eight camp shifts while living along the track. The four years were hard on Ian and Sue with constantly changing schools and on occasions (excluding Edungalba) some disinterest from teaching staff because they were not permanent pupils. They needed some stability in their schooling. For this reason, Beryl moved back to the farmhouse and I continued to come home at weekends. After a few months I was finally released from that job and returned to Ambrose where the children's life was more stable and I returned to ordinary track maintenance.

We stayed there until 1973 when we moved to Rockhampton and in 1980 I began training others and more or less did that until retirement in 1996.

Looking back, it was an extraordinary experience for a young family with five small children and all the while

Beryl would say 'I wish I could write, because you could write a book about all this'. Little did we know then, that all these years later, we'd be trying to do just that.

The derailment



Wagon pick up.

Exercise & Adventure

Edited from conversations with Merv Kennedy

I was born in Barcaldine 27 July 1924.

Sport played a big part in my growing years, probably partly due to the enthusiasm of my father Patrick Kennedy who was quite a sportsman himself.

Dad told the tale of the time the Australian cricket team including Bradman, played in Rockhampton. I was about five at the time. While they were here they were taken on trips to Yeppoon and there was a function held for them at the Normanby Hotel which was on the corner of William and Bolsover Streets. O'Reilly was a good guy he said, but all the others were very standoffish and in fact Dad had a slight altercation with Bradman himself during the lead-up to a game when my father actually confiscated the ball for a short time. Syd Biles and my father Patrick were the Umpires for that visit and my father was made a life member of the Umpires Association as a result of his involvement.

When I was about 15 I was really into roller-skating which my mother wasn't too pleased about because she was wary of skating ever since falling and breaking her wrist. The first roller skating rink was where Lawrence Motors was in town before it moved to the corner of Archer & East Streets. Dad helped dig the rink up in the early 1900s to build the Lawrence Motors building. I played roller hockey, took part in roller dancing and ballet, and competed in speed skating. We skated with wooden wheels made from guava wood, which was hand gathered from the creek bank at Sleipner Junction

between Yeppoon and Emu Park, and then we turned them on a lathe ourselves. They had to be replaced every two weeks because skate hockey wore them down.

When I was about five years of age, the Railway Recreation Club started. It was very strong and father was very involved. Gymnastics operated in the Drill Hall on the corner of Archer Street in the building that has just recently been vacated by 42nd Battalion. The instructor was a Mr Caruthers who taught all forms of physical education to male railway employees and their sons. It moved out of those premises and into a room across from the Liberty Building where Target is now, which had been built and was operating as a dance hall.

From there, the Railways offered the committee land to build a hall on a vacant lot. The recession hit and that land was sold. Then an unused dirt floor shed with palings around the outside was given to them and the parents and members, with material supplied by the Railways, put metal round the outside and built a floor. A springboard, vaulting horses and mats were constructed in the Railway Workshops with permission from the Commissioner and horizontal bars and rings were added. I was only a kid, but I remember how hard all the fathers worked. As soon as the floor went down, the committee began to organise fund raising dances right from the start.

Caruthers moved on and then a fellow who was a wrestler and physical fitness devotee who was out



Taken in the Stanley Street hall

Seated first left in singlet – George Kerguard and 4 places up, me with hand over face.

Back row third from right Dad, end of back row on right brother Stan in singlet.



Fisherman's Beach Labour Day Picnic.

Centre standing George Kerguard with brother Stan doing handstand on shoulders.

Extreme left, me and Paddy Kennedy (Dad) on all fours wearing hat.

of work turned up and the committee put it to the Railway that he be given the job. His name was George Kerguard; he was a tough instructor but a damn nice bloke. Some years later girls were admitted.

Then a fellow by the name of Bill Sutton came to work for *The Morning Bulletin*. Bill Sutton was a brilliant gymnast. There was a troupe of acrobats who toured the world in those days called the Alexander Troup and Bill Sutton who was a tumbling and balancing expert had been invited to join them, but he knocked them back. So he came to the Railway Recreation Club and taught there part-time.

Another Chinese balancing troupe came to Rockhampton and they were invited to the Railway Recreation Hall in the hope that they would pass on some of their knowledge. They just sat and watched for a long time until Bill Sutton did a demonstration of his famous 'one-wheel bike' balancing act and after that, for some reason, they all stood up and joined in.

Bill was a master on that one-wheel bike; he was once bet two bob that he couldn't ride it from the top of the *Bulletin* steps to the bottom. He won the bet.

My brother Stan had contracted polio and walked with the aid of a crutch, but as a gymnast, he was extraordinary. He got help from the Chinese troop and then built and perfected a balancing act on four chairs, which became pretty famous around Rockhampton. He used to be able to do hand stands and balance on virtually anything. Anything that is, other than the stage at the School of Arts where the stage tipped forward at the front. He had to do his balancing chair act differently there, counterbalancing the slope with his

body because he didn't want to land in the laps of the people in the front row.

When the new multi story Railway administration building was opened I was working in despatch. It was a bit of a joke really because no one other than pigeons occupied it for 12 months because the wrong glass had been fitted at the windows. It was not cyclone safe. A member is said to have commented at the time of moving in 'They've chased all the pigeons out and put in a mob of galahs'.

They had an Honour Board in the old building which was transferred to the new building, listing railway personnel who served in the war. I signed up at Redbank in 1943. Nearly all my mates had already been called up and I hadn't, so I went to see them to ask why. They told me I was listed as reserved occupation, which I really wasn't, and I told them so. Within a week, I got my call up.

I served in the army mostly at a place called Marauke in Dutch New Guinea. It was really just a big coconut plantation and a swamp and not much more. They had an airstrip which was built over the swamp with trees laid lengthways side by side down the length of the strip and then they sent trucks to the beach for sand, which was laid over and in-between the trunks and then they laid this interlocking metal on top of all of that. It rained so much and was so swampy that in the beginning sometimes, to get to the mess hut, you'd be wading through water up to your waist. There were snakes everywhere.

After approximately five months on Marauke, I had problems with my nose and needed an operation so I



The four chairs. Stan on top and me 'assisting' aged roughly 13.

George Kerguard doing handstand with brother Stan on his back.



flew out of there on a DH86, 4 engine Dragon Repad which was covered in fabric like the Tiger Moths. Taking off along this runway was hair-raising with it rattling and flapping so hard it shook every bone in your body. The flight from there was good until we came in to re-fuel on Horn Island, where the plane once again vibrated and flapped like mad as it came in to land. I was really happy to see the ground.

We left Horn Island and flew to Jacky-Jacky on the Cape to pick up another patient – an air force chap who had gone 'troppo'. Next stop was Iron Range on the Cape and then on to Cooktown where we stopped overnight to do some repairs on the engine.

On the way to Cooktown, the 'troppo' patient lost it completely and amongst other things, wanted to fly the aircraft. The steward on board and I literally had to sit on him to restrain him. We grabbed him and put him back on his stretcher. When we landed, there were some tents and they got an army stretcher and tied him down to it until he looked like a mummy. We woke at about 6 am and then there was almost as much hue and cry because he was doing his best to get out of his ties and he had to be restrained again.

From Cooktown it was a stop at the Australian Army General Hospital on the Atherton Tablelands. This coincided with Anzac Day and even though I was technically a patient, I went to the Anzac Day Parade

about five miles away.

The next day when we got out to the airstrip we found we were to take off in a Lockheed Loadstar which was a big plane and as we were boarding we heard the two pilots asking each other if they thought they would clear the trees at the end of the runway. They seemed to be very apprehensive. We had some really nervous moments until they sailed over the treetops easily and one of their regular crew, obviously looking at our pinched expressions said, 'Did they tell you they didn't think they'd make it?' When we said, 'Yes' he laughed out loud and said, 'They do that all the time'.

When we landed at Archerfield we were taken by car to Redbank where I had joined up in the first place. I had my operation there.

I was granted leave and went by train up to Rockhampton where my family met me. I couldn't believe the change in my father in such a short time. He had aged and gone grey. His brother had been killed at Gallipoli and he was most anxious about having me at the front.

When I had first signed up, I had been sent to Sydney to Ingleburn for training for some months and then we were shipped by train to Cairns, but once we reached Rockhampton, the line was underwater with flood so we were sent inland by rail in a circuitous route via Longreach, Winton and then on the Mt Isa line to Townsville, on lines that don't even exist any

more. From Cairns we were sent to Marauke on the Islander Tramp Steamer which had been the last one out of Malaya and bore machine gun indentations from Japanese fire. We slept up on the top deck.

When we pulled in to Rockhampton it was during the day and we were told there would be a delay of about ¾ hour so I hotfooted it round to Dad who was working as a driller in the boilermakers shop at the Railway. He rang home to tell Mum I was here and as the train went up Archer Street, there was Mum with my Sister-in-law with a cake for me as I went past. It didn't last long.

On my way back to duty this second time, we boarded at Hamilton Wharf in Brisbane. When we arrived, there were quite a number of American Negroes ready to go on board. Once boarded all hell broke loose because they wouldn't move without donning a Mae West first. It seems they were petrified of being torpedoed. I came to know these Negroes as natural comedians and during the journey up, there always seemed to be one of them planted right on the bow. I finally asked why and in his Yankee drawl, he told me that he was the periscope spotter, and when he saw a periscope denoting a sub in the area, he was to warn all the others so they could jump overboard.

When it was time for my next leave, I was put on board what used to be a cruise ship. It was luxury compared to the old Islander. We landed in Brisbane and were put straight on to the Exhibition platform without time for cleaning up and then divided into groups for Brisbane/Central/Northern and the trains were loaded and dispatched.

When I arrived back home I had all my gear, helmet, packs, rifle etc hanging all over me as I went along the platform and a girl I used to dance with ignored me when I spoke to her. I thought 'Gee that's not a very good welcome home'. The same girl was at a dance at the School of Arts a few nights later and when we were dancing, I chipped her about ignoring me at the station. She said she hadn't recognised me unkempt and unclean and under all that gear and she apologised profusely.

Later on, sick of wearing uniform, I donned some civvies and went for a walk along East Street only to be abused by an old lady for not doing my duty and 'how dare I be wandering around in civvies when there were boys over there getting killed'. She only calmed down when I showed her my pretty permanent white chinstrap mark and convinced her I was home on leave and would be going back to 'do my bit'.

When I did go back I went to a beautiful spot called Torikina in the Solomon Islands. We were stationed on a picturesque bay just five miles from an active volcano where you could almost set your watches when it rained each day at 4 pm. The ground was covered in pumice. Our unit had taken over after an American division had moved out and the Yankee staff were still there cleaning out. One of the staff members apologised because he had yet to dig a pit to burn the left over food stocks which they were not taking with them. Our head cook

told him that he would be happy to have his boys do that for them and to just stack it all under a tree. They were really impressed with our cooperation. After they were gone, we lived like kings on those rations with delicacies like frankfurts and real cheese for about six months.

The campsite at Torikina was a pretty amazing place for lots of reasons. The Yanks had set up a picture show there. The seats were rows of logs on the ground with the projector at the back and the screen was fabric strung between posts. Behind those posts were well-organised crap games and swy (two-up), with all the attendant-betting going on.

At the entrance to the theatre was a sort of trading centre where everyone and anyone had anything and everything for sale – grog, cameras and anything they could get their hands on to sell at Ned Kelly prices. I once sold a bottle of gin there for £10 and I regularly sold brooches made by someone else which were entwined hearts. They sold like hot cakes to send back to sweethearts and wives. As I said, Ned Kelly would have been happy with the takings and my proceeds got me a motor bike when I got back home.

The Yanks also sold lemon drink at the movies. It was made from a powder but tasted like the real thing. Later they informed us that the same powder was the best thing ever found for cleaning stains from cement.

Along with the craps and swy, the bookies had a big thing going on AFL games and betting was heavy right up until the results of the games came through normal channels two days after they were played. There was one group who were raking in the money. It turned out that some of them were in signals and through their long distance short wave, they'd pick up the information and make their bets after the games had been played, but before the official results came through. Eventually the bookies found out – they were not amused!

From Torikina, I was transferred to the Buin area where immediately on arriving at my tent an officer told me to report to a weapons workshop wagon. I got in with the driver and went for a few miles before he stopped, opened the door and pushed it back. As it was extremely hot, I said 'What a good idea, I'll cool off too.' The driver very swiftly set me right, it had nothing to do with letting the air in – because we were in hostile territory, it had everything to do with getting out under fire, as quickly as possible.

When we got to our destination, the wagon was left there to enable work to be done on weapons and we started the return trip in a jeep that had followed us up. Along the way, we detoured to a mortar position to leave a message and when we got back to camp we were notified that ten minutes after we left, the Japanese had attacked that same position.

My active career finished in Buin at the southern end of Bougainvillea. I caught a bug in my lungs from somewhere and was pretty crook when a bloke from the aid post insisted I see the doctor who sent me back to

Torikina to the Army Hospital the day he saw me. After many tests, they still could not determine what I had but they 'boarded' me from A to Constitutional L & B2. I was sent back on the boat *River Burdekin* to Brisbane where I was placed at the Mt Gravatt Workshops. I was surplus to my trade as a panel beater, so worked first in mechanical and then the paint shop.

After three years I came up for demob. They offered me three stripes to stay in, in charge of the paint/panel shops. Like a fool, I took demob. I should have stayed there and taken the three stripes because jobs were hard to get in my trade.

I worked around Brisbane for two and a half years, came back to Rockhampton, met and married Beryl and we spent some time living and working in Biloela, Goomeri and Maryborough. Over the next few weeks I did a number of jobs – carting logs and working as a collector

salesman amongst them. I began work with Beckman's Panel Works as a panel beater but a recession hit and that job ran out. I put in some time at the Lakes Creek canning works, before I came back to Beckman's where I stayed for the next 12 and a half years. When I was working with the Insurance Company, I would take the train to Mt Morgan three times a month and then use a cycle to travel the Mt Morgan hills, visiting insurance customers. While we were in Goomeri, I joined the CMF where I stayed for the next 12 and a half years.

I retired 19 years ago at age 60. Beryl and I have taken a number of caravan trips to various places around Australia since then. That bug in my lungs still gives me some trouble but our time now is taken up with our family : one son, three grandchildren and two great grandchildren and I enjoy playing a bit of indoor bowls.



Brother Stan

A Woman of Pluck

Edited from 'The tale of Limerick Farm' written by Phoebe's great granddaughter – Susan Corley.

Submitted by Alan Bond.

Harry (Henry) Garner married Phoebe Jewson in London in 1893 and when they decided to move the family to Australia, they had six surviving children and were the owners of a shop that sold anything from bacon to fire starters and herrings to pickled onions. It was agreed that Henry would go first and prepare a home for the others to come to and Phoebe would sell the goodwill of the store and finalise their business in England. Before he left, Henry made a will dated 16 April 1912, appointing his wife executor and leaving all he owned to her.

Henry arrived in Brisbane around 1912 or 13 where he was unable to find work so he made his way north – walking, doing odd jobs along the way with one of his main food sources, pumpkin.

Henry took up a scrub selection at Dululu, containing 140 acres and he lived in a tent on the selection of his neighbour Mr Atterbury. They had an agreement to work both properties in conjunction with each other. By October 1915, after about two years, they had cleared nearly 70 acres of scrub and erected 32 chains of fencing on Henry's selection.

Unaccompanied, son Bill aged 12 was sent to join his father about a year later, to get him away from the bad influence of local London gangs.

Phoebe had sold the shop but war broke out in Europe and she was conscripted to work for the war effort picking fruit. Eventually however in October 1915, Phoebe then aged 43 and her children – Phoebe Jnr (age 20), Ellen (19), Henry Jnr (16), Ada (11), Peter (nine) and Dolly (six), boarded the SS Limerick in London along with 181 passengers of whom 150 were nominated as migrants by friends or relatives in Queensland.

Daughter Ada says that her father had made arrangements from Queensland for their passages. Fares were about £3 for adults and £1/12/6 for children.

At about the same time as Phoebe and the children were setting sail, Henry and son William left about 8 am one day without Mr Atterbury, to cut scrub. At about 9.30 am, William came running back to tell Atterbury that a tree had fallen on his father and that he was dead.

This news reached the family at Port Said and when asked if she would return to England. Phoebe said, 'No, I have a boy in Australia and I've sold everything in England. I'll go to make a new life for the children'.

The SS *Limerick* arrived at Port Alma on 6 December 1915 to be greeted by William who had made his way there and had been waiting for two or three days at the wharf. The Immigration Department put them up in a boarding house in Bolsover Street and the newspapers at the time described

Phoebe as a 'brave woman or a woman of pluck'. About two weeks after they arrived, they boarded a train in Rockhampton for the journey to an unknown lifestyle in Dululu.

A farmer lent them his cart shed to live in until a house could be built on their farm, which they were to call Limerick Farm after the ship that brought them to Australia. The shed had boughs and branches for walls and they slept in what Ada called 'trellis beds' ie saplings through bags supported by forked stumps. Things were tough but they never went hungry because others shared with them. If they managed to catch a wallaby, they were rich for a day. Pumpkin was a staple food and the growing tips of the vine were used as greens.

Henry had begun a house and the locals organised a working bee to finish it and the St Vincent De Paul Society sent them food, clothing and furniture. The local Member of Parliament was also helpful. Arrangements were made almost immediately for the government to pay Phoebe an allowance of 10/- per week per child for the three younger children until they reached the age of 13 and arrangements were made for Harry and Bill to work as billy boys for the railway line gangs beyond Wowan, some 14 km away. Phoebe Jnr and Ellen obtained jobs in Mt Morgan.

Once Henry's estate was settled, thanks to his fortuitous will, Phoebe was able to have ownership of the property transferred to her name and some insurance was used to pay off at least a portion of the loan.

Ada says they learned to be Australians the hard way but she still remembers her mother saying 'Lovely Australia'. Everyone worked hard. Out late at night clearing stumps, learning to plough by harnessing big horses and using a stump jump plough. Even before all the land was cleared they had corn growing only to see someone else's cows break through their temporary fences and eat it. They also planted potatoes and when someone told them they had planted them upside down, they all went out, dug them up, turned them over and replanted. Phoebe bought some cows from the Archer brothers and everyone learned to milk.

At first they were too frightened to go out alone at night or go home from the paddocks on their own. For Londoners, the sounds of dingoes howling and birds screeching were very frightening. Even ants, flies and wallabies scared these 'pommies'.

There was no official post office at Dululu. Mail was brought down from Mt Morgan by train, collected by local contractors who exchanged outgoing mail and then distributed throughout the area. Phoebe became the unofficial contractor walking three miles to the

train with the sealed bag of mail, crossing the Dee River which was not bridged. After being thrown a number of times, she taught herself to ride a small, piebald pony. Later she learned to drive a sulky and when the river was in major flood, goods and mail had to be boated across the river.

Things gradually improved and new skills were learned – baking bread; cooking over an open fire; doing laundry which was boiled over an open fire; killing their own animals for meat and smoking pork for bacon and shooting wild turkeys and wallabies. A wood stove was installed in the house, kerosene lamps used for lighting and 'wagga' rugs made from cleaned corn sacks.

A small school opened in 1916 and was quickly replaced by a larger structure. The children walked about three and a half miles to the school and soon learned to recognise who had gone before them by the footprints in the dust.

As her own family grew up and left home, Phoebe continued to work the farm. She employed youths from the Rockhampton orphanages to help her until, in the period 1934 – 1936, she sold the farm and moved to Rockhampton where she lived in East Street.

In October 1916, Ellen Garner, Phoebe's second eldest daughter married John (Jack) Shepherd at Mt Morgan where he had been born in 1896. At first they lived in Mt Morgan but within a couple of years they moved back to Dululu and it was Jack who taught the Garners how to snare and skin wallabies. He sold the skins and gave them half the price. Eventually Ellen and Jack bought a general store at Koongal to which a post office was later added. The Koongal Post Office and Store stayed in the Shepherd family until the time of its closure around 1990, when Ellen's grandson Glen Shepherd and his wife Marie were operating it. Apart from sons William and Peter, Phoebe's other children married and moved away to Mackay and Brisbane; William moved to Darwin and Peter lived much of his life with his sister Ellen Shepherd.

Phoebe Garner continued to live in Rockhampton until her death in 1951 aged 79 years. She was a true pioneer who overcame enormous difficulties to become a proud Australian.

Phoebe's youngest daughter Dolly, married Leslie Bond (from the story Ethel Sarah Sales) and their son is Alan Bond. Dolly, aged 96 is living in Brisbane.



SS City of Limerick – Courtesy of Queensland State Library

Work and Worship

By John F Webber

Lorna McDonald, in her book 'Rockhampton: A History of City and District', notes that a special train ran from Westwood to carry people in to the ceremony of the laying of the foundation stone of Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Cathedral, by Bishop Cani in 1895. It was a large and important event attended by 2000 people. Work on the structure virtually ceased the following year however, due to lack of funds.

Bishop Cani passed away in 1898 and by 1899 when the new Bishop, Rev Joseph Higgs DD arrived, he found a building with only three walls and no furniture. As he had been advised that Cardinal Moran would be in Rockhampton to open the new building toward the end of the same year, no time was lost to get it ready.

The Cathedral, a fine example of traditional European church architecture with its twin towers and stone parapets was built of Stanwell sandstone and its official opening took place on 15 October, 1899 in the presence of no less than four archbishops and about ten bishops.

My family connection with Saint Joseph's began back in those early days. My mother's people have a strong connection with this region. Before marriage to my father, the late Frank Webber, she was a sibling of the Edmestone family.

My great grandfather, the late James Edmestone (Snr), immigrated to the Yeppoon and Rockhampton area from Scotland. He had many jobs around Rockhampton, but the job connected to my story is when he worked between the period 17 March 1895 to 15 October 1899, as a bit of a jack-of-all-trades, as a carpenter, stonemason and labourer, on the original construction of the Cathedral.

One of the family stories that came to light from my cousin Bevin Edmestone on the occasion of an Edmestone/Kerr family reunion, tells of my grandfather's survival from a fall from one of the two high towers which were being erected. Apparently there had been rain during the night before his fall and he was the first to go up the tower in the morning.

Whether the rain caused the scaffolding to give way or he slipped on the wet surface, I'm not sure, but he is said to have fallen down between three stacks of what were probably the Stanwell sandstone blocks. They obscured him from the others working there who were sure he must have been killed.

His co-workers were still plucking up the courage to go and have a look, when he walked out with only minor injuries! It appears he had fallen on a stack of ropes that were being used on the job. Family legend has it that his wife Christina said at the time – 'He was spared because neither God nor the Devil wanted him.'

My entry into the story begins in the early part of the 1980s. My father Frank Webber was a bridge carpenter with the Railway and his brother, my Uncle Edward James Webber was a builder.

So in 1971, following in their footsteps, I started work with J M Kelly Builders, where I stayed for a little over 30 years. In the early eighties, they procured the contract to complete Saint Joseph's Cathedral. Possibly due to the war, it had never been completely finished and at the back, there used to be an enormous heavy timber hardwood and galvanised wall filling in the last archway. I can tell you that the roofing iron from the back hall is now on a hay shed at Wowan.

The completion of the Cathedral was the addition of the Sacristy which was to be attached to the last side of the Cathedral. The extension was done quite a bit differently to the original design. Instead of a full stone block, the extension was done with only a 75 mm (3 inch) outside stone skin, so all the other structure behind it was built in reinforced concrete filled masonry block. John Petrie, stonemasons from Brisbane worked on the building. The huge windows were actually shaped in concrete with the formwork pulled up by crane; the inner and outer formwork bolted together and then poured on site with reinforced concrete.

To make the shapes for all the angles and clovers at the top of the windows, we shaped them out of Oregon Pine and ply, filling out all the imperfections with builders bog which was then smoothed with sandpaper before fixing in position to the formwork.

All this may sound easy but it needs to be remembered that all the outside reveals, mullions and styles are tapered back to where the lead-light stained glass is fixed, so not much is square. It was exacting and time consuming work.

All the moulding inside was done by taping the original sandstone below the huge arches then forming a box around the structure before filling it with Polyurethane to obtain a mould of the original. This was then fixed in position to be poured with concrete to reproduce a match to the original shape, a feat in itself.

The huge arches were formed and shaped out of 19 mm ply and timber and suspended by steel rods from the timber roof purlins and then all the timber mouldings attached. The original arches looked to be made out of tramlines or something similar, also the reinforcing stone in the original footing looked to have tramlines in it as well.

The inner hall of the Cathedral was rendered and painted so as to give the same appearance as the sandstone block.

After the main structure was done and the windows completed, shapes had to be made from ply for the big back window. The measurements here had to be absolutely exact, because they were sent to Birmingham in England where the leadlight window glass was made. It would have been a long and costly exercise to send back any piece that had been incorrectly measured. Once the firm in Birmingham had completed their work, the glass was sent back to Australia, to be fitted

here by local glaziers. I think I am correct in saying that the Rasmussen family donated this window.

Fr John Rasmussen was one of the priests there at the time the work was being done. The Bishop was Bernard Wallace and the other priests I can remember were Fr John Grace, Fr Brian Hannaford and Fr Karl, so called because we could not pronounce his last name.

I believe I am also correct in saying that the Birmingham firm that produced the glass for the window that was added as part of the extension, was the same firm that did the windows in the original building, which means it had been in business for a very long time. Later down the track, they sent some of their own glaziers out and we assisted them to take the stained glass out of most of the original windows and to pack and crate them to be sent back to England to be repaired.

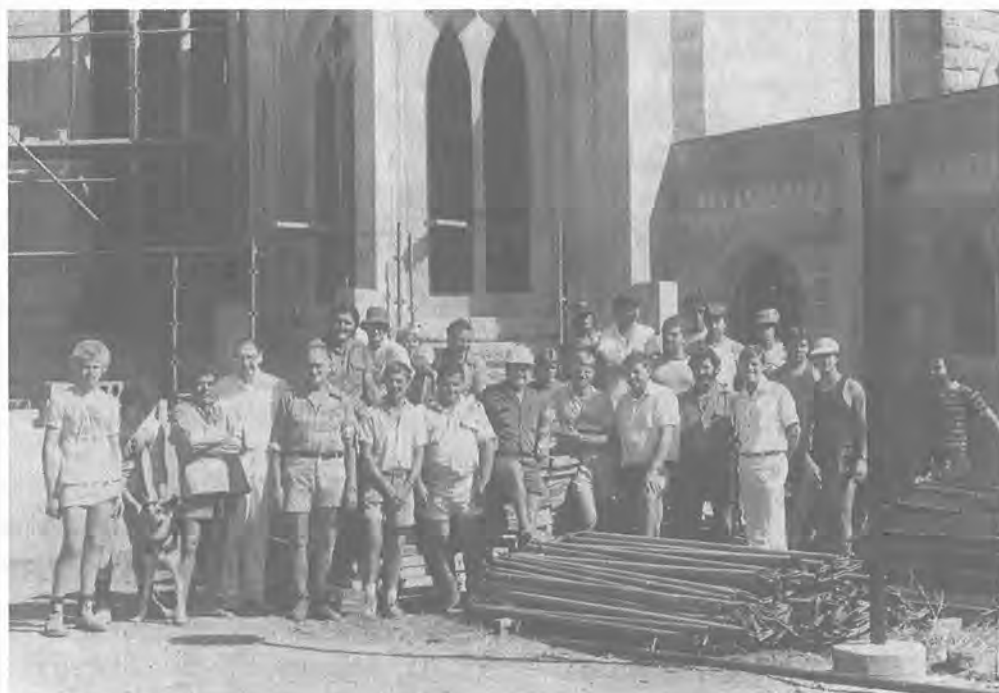
One thing I remember clearly is that these fellows turned up in Rockhampton mid November. They had left Birmingham in minus ten-degree weather, only to arrive in Rockhampton to 'hotter than hell' 38 degrees. To my surprise, on their first day at work, they had a Jacky Howe singlet on, shorts and boots. They were lily white. I said, 'You fellows are going to get really burnt,' and they certainly did!

Bishop Wallace sent each one of us this photo in a folder on which he had hand written 'With many thanks, Bishop Bernard Wallace.' It shows some of the Cathedral workers and includes: 4th from left – Bishop Wallace and in front on the right, Fr John Rasmussen, both wearing all white and long pants. I am first on the left at the back with dark hair. Others were Ronnie Zangary, Derek Kershaw, Noel Backhouse, Graeme Bell, Jimmy Liddle, Fred Agius, Eric Nitz, Bruce McAllister, Tom Lynham, Colin Balderson and other stonemasons, cabinet makers and electricians.

This is my recollection of some of the work that went into my time at Saint Joseph's. I no longer work in the building industry. Some would say I was silly enough to follow my grandfather and father in to the building trade, but although it was a trade that required bloody hard work, it had its good points to go with it.

Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Cathedral is not only a place of worship but also a masterpiece of architecture, which has a grand local history; it attracts a great number of tourists and visitors to Rockhampton. It was an incredible experience to work on this building and I am proud of our family's connection with the Cathedral.

Me doing maintenance on the Bishops chair



Thank you

The publication of Down Memory Lane - Book III, would not have been possible without the encouragement and financial support of the people listed hereunder. Through their generosity, a tiny bit more of Central Queensland's heritage has been captured and saved for those who follow. All who gain pleasure or knowledge from these stories, give thanks to :

Baxter Group Real Estate

Connolly Schirmer & Batts

Hon Alan Demack AO

Dreamtime Cultural Centre

Hillcrest Rockhampton Private Hospital

MacNevins Parts

Eric & Beryl Schneider

Stanwell Power Station

