

MEMORIES OF SHOREHAM

BY LORIS WOODS

In 1920 my grandparents Ada and Clarrie Wilson and 3 children (my mother Dorothy and her two brothers Will & Albert) purchased a 10 acre property in Prout Webb Rd Shoreham financed with money he received when repatriated from the Army after the 1st world war.

Then came the hard part. They started from scratch. Cleared the land by hand. The idea was to build a guest house to be named the "Cliffs". Shoreham had developed as a holiday destination between about 1916 and 1929.

All building materials were brought from Melbourne. Roads were rough it was a very arduous journey and it would take a day to travel from Melbourne with materials often arriving late at night. The family lived in tents while building.

My mother and her brothers attended the school in Shoreham in this very room we are meeting in today. Classes were from Grade 1 to Grade 6 all in this room. Vie Horne was one of the teacher then. My mother always had great memories of those days. Kids riding their horses and bikes to school. It was a very close community. Albert made many life time friends, one being Sid Hitchcock who passed away recently. Sid was the son of Mr & Mrs Hitchcock who was postmistress and also ran the General Store which was situated where the Shoreham Post Office is today. Telephones in that day were party lines where you shared a line with all in sundry and you never knew who was listening in to your conversation. Gran always growled that Mrs Hitchcock was always on the other end listening. I remember going to the store with my father one day and Mrs Hitchcock said to my father " Would the little girl like a lolly?" "I'm sure she would" said my father. "Well that will be a penny please" said Mrs Hitchcock.

When my mother's older brother Will turned 14 and no jobs available he was recruited to Cerberus to serve with the Navy which he did till well after WW2.

My mother and Uncle could tell many stories of those days. Bonfires and parties on Shoreham Beach. Swimming, fishing off the reef, spotlighting for Garfish at night, or for fishing for Silver Bream and Eels in the creek. You wouldn't find any there now. The Shoreham creek has a "Could be polluted" sign on it now.

My grandmother Ada was a very enterprising woman born in 1889 and died in 1962. Grandfather Clarrie was born in 1881 and died 1970. The only time my grandparents could make money was during the summer and holiday period and she was very good at that, in fact she let every room in the house.

She organized everything for the guests, but left the family without anywhere to sleep, so they lived in the single room bungalow and tents at the back of the house. My uncle used to sleep in a water tank, lying on its side with rocks under it "That was his double bed. The sides were blocked up and it was covered with canvas. He said it was the best room in the house.

Gran did all the cooking for the guests. It was hands on for the family everyone was recruited to help. Her sisters and nieces would wait on the tables. The washing up must have been massive. No dishwashers in those days

My mother after leaving school found a job as a housemaid at St Andrews Guest House Flinders (which was later burnt down) riding her bike to Flinders and home each day. On arriving home rounding up the cows that had wandered far and wide and milking morning and night. They were tough times, and there was butter to be made. My mother an avid reader was always in trouble as she would read a book while winding the handle of the churn and overdoing the cream or butter. .

Gran was very musical and was an accomplish pianist. She taught dancing and for years would open up the Cliffs for New Years Dances. Over 200 hundreds people would arrive in jinkers, buggies and motor cars which were very few. The suppers were huge. Everyone bringing food. Tea and milk coffee was made in 4 Gallon kerosene tins.

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Mode for transport was horse and jinker or bike travelling to pick up supplies at the general store or the butcher in Flinders on occasions although mostly supplies would be delivered to the house by horse and jinker with lots of flies following the butchers cart and horse.

Betty Buxton's her father-in-law was instrumental in the subdivision of the Buxton Estate in 1923) recalls first coming to Shoreham as a child in the 1920's and staying at "The Cliffs". Betty said we were young, and I had 2 sisters and we were absolutely thrilled to bits, because there were candles and kerosene lamps. It was stormy and the wind was blowing, the trees were swaying, we thought it was terribly exciting. In 1935 the house burnt to the ground. A log fell out of the open fire and the house was completely destroyed.

My Grandfather Clarrie and his youngest son youngest son Albert a 14 yr old started to build again. Bringing materials from Melbourne. Everything cut by hand. A job you wouldn't even consider doing these days.

After clearing up after the fire and starting to rebuild Grandma announced "I have news for you Clarrie and you are not going like it. That was June 1936. She said "There was an advert in the paper and I answered it. There is a group looking for holiday accommodation at Christmas and are coming down to inspect the place. So they duly arrived, looked at the plans and said. We will agree to that, but if it's not finish by Christmas, there will be a fine of 500 pounds. So she accepted it. They worked from daylight to dark and when the weather improved 6am to 10pm each day. They were finishing the wallpapering and painting as the guests arrived.

The Cliffs was very popular not only with guests, YMCA, Croydon Monastery, Clubs, Groups but with war approaching with business in decline the family were forced to Melbourne to seek work.

Our holidays were spent at Shoreham if my uncle Albert had enough petrol and that was 4 gallons a month and his old car certainly guzzled that up. He saved up his petrol rations each month and when it was time to come to Shoreham he loaded the car with his extra gallons of petrol, 3 kids (my sister arrived later), mum & dad and luggage. I'm sure work Safe wouldn't condone that these days. Later on he installed a gas producer on the back of his car, and we puffed along with fumes coming out of the chimney out of this contraption installed on the back of the car. (I think it worked by burning coke. I'm not sure how it worked?) If there was not enough petrol it meant Catching the train from St Kilda to Flinders St and then the train to Frankston and the Service Car (driven by Freddie Moon from Flinders) winding its way through all the wayside places before finally reaching Shoreham.

It was war time and I can remember arriving at the Cliffs only to be confronted by a soldier on guard at the front gate. The army had commandeered the Cliffs and I am sure Gran was not informed they were going to commandeer the house. The house was ransacked of all furniture and bedding taken to make the life of a soldier more comfortable. Her beloved piano was found in the bush somewhere. I remember the soldiers playing with my brothers and myself. One picking me up and swinging me around. Gran did receive compensation from the army after the war but it certainly didn't cover the cost of repairs and replacing goods.

I can still remember the foxholes and barb wire left on the beach which was still there after the war a menace to all that frequented the beach and eventually rusted away. I think by the time war finished Gran felt it was time to retire so in 1945 "The Cliffs" was sold to the Croydon Monastery which still own it till this day, but the story didn't end there she then had the foresight to buy the property in Blake St that's where I live today for 400 pound and I am the 3rd generation of my family to live in Shoreham. Gran was certainly a very enterprising woman.

This poem was sent to my mother by a teacher that had taught at Shoreham and had contracted consumption as it was called in those days.

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"Gran Tully"
Mt Evelyn
15. 3 26

Dear Dorothy,

Just a line to you
To say Hello and How do you do ?
I am sure you would like to be
Up in the country here with me,
To hear the birds sing up in the trees
And catch the breath of the mountain breeze.
Today while you were doing Geography
I was watching a baby frog
Which lives in a pool by the railway station
And never has to do dictation.
And while I stood beside that pool
I saw a girl on the way to school.
I thought to myself, Oh, dearie me,
Surely that's where I ought to be
Down at my school beside the sea
But the doctor won't let me, don't you see.
So Albert goes to school I hear
Though now and again he doesn't appear
To take his seat on the little forum
Where the sun shines through to keep him warm
How do you like the Grades work?
I hope that Algebra you don't shirk.
Do you still read books as you used to do?
And go for swims in the bay so blue?
A little bird told me that this day week
He saw you bathing beyond the creek.
He also said though against the rule
He'd seen you talking to Mag . in school
However, although he said it was true.
I told him, "No, it couldn't be you".
Pat Flossie for me as soon as you can
And hand out another pat for Dan.
Wouldn't you like to be up this way
With nothing at all to do all day
But sit and read or go for a walk
And nobody tries to stop your talk.

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Remember me to the girls and boys
Say that I miss their busy noise.
Tell them I may look in some day
To see them work and to see them play.
If ever you get a minute to spare
Just seat yourself in the "Old Arm Chair"
And scribble a note, I'll be pleased to see
A letter addressed by you to me.
Now, Dofy dear I must say adieu
And wish the best of luck to you.
Just drop me a note way up to the hills
With all good luck, yours AG Mills.

My mother would have been 14. And from memory I think she helped out at the school at times as there wasn't a lot to do.