



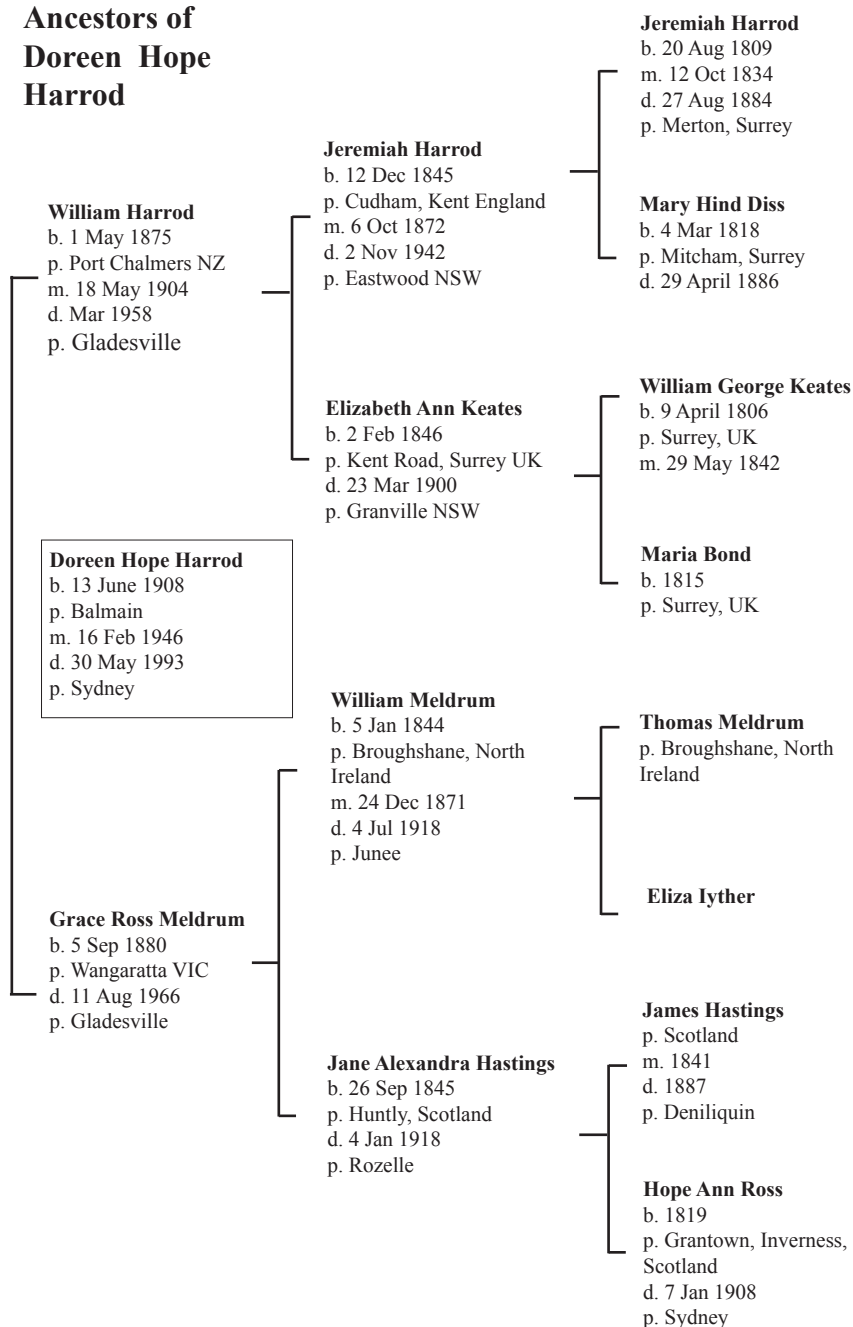
FROM
GLADESVILLE
TO
GIRILAMBONE

DOREEN HOPE SKINNER
13th June 1908 to 30th May, 1993

Written by Ruth Lynch
All original artwork by Doreen Harrod

Barangle Publishing
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Ancestors of Doreen Hope Harrod



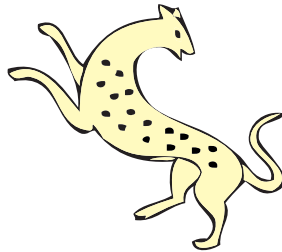
Salt of the Earth

*New friends I cherish and treasure their worth,
But old friends to me are the salt of the earth
Friends are like garments that everyone wears -
New ones are needed for dress-up affairs;
But when we're at leisure, we're more apt to choose
The clothes that we purchased with last season's shoes.*

*Things we grow used to are things we love best -
The ones we are certain have weathered the test
And isn't it true, since we're talking of friends,
that new ones bring pleasure when everything blends?
But when we want someone who thinks as we do
And who fits, as is said, like last summer's shoe,,
We turn to the friends who have stuck through the years,
Who echo our laughter and dry up our tears;
They know every weakness and fault we possess
But sometimes forget them in friendships caress.*

*The story is old yet fragrant and sweet;
I've said it before, but just let me repeat:
New friends I cherish and treasure their worth,
But old friends to me are the salt of the earth.*

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INTRODUCTION

AT “GRANDMA’S” FUNERAL ON 2nd June 1993 at St Matthews West Pennant Hills, her son-in-law, my husband Gary, gave a very moving tribute to this beautiful lady who I had the privilege to call “Mum”.

This is part of what Gary had to say, which I feel, really sums up this quite amazing lady:

“Doreen Hope Skinner, Grandma to all, was born some 85 years ago in Sydney. Grandma was brought up as a lady who was at home with butter knives, salt spoons and serviettes, all of which are seldom seen today.”

She was the only girl in a family of three children. Not long after her birth her family started a company called Weir and Harrod. This company still operates today and she was the Chairperson and Matriarch of that organization.

During the war years her family were involved in various pursuits relevant to the war. Grandma worked during the day and during the night she did duty as an air observer.

This was a voluntary air defense organization which in her case meant working all day, then spending all night on top of the AWA building looking for and spotting enemy planes.

She became the first qualified draughtswoman in NSW when working at the National Standards Lab CSIRO. She became a life member of a number of organizations including the Red Cross, serving well in excess of 40 years. She was an active member of the CWA joining in 1946 when she moved with her husband to Anglebar Girilambone when she was 38 years of age

For a lady to move from a society of butter knives, serviettes and salt spoons to a 4 room house with a pit toilet, and washroom under a tank stand, and summer dust storms, was quite a change indeed. She sometimes talked about how tough it was.

Like all people Grandma had her loves and prejudices. A memorable example was her love of cricket and the prejudices that went with it. Grandma would get totally involved and engrossed in a televised match. She would leave her set to

inform the rest of the family of some incident of significant happening during the match. The West Indies being very good cricketers but unfortunately not wearing a green cap, were not viewed with completely dispassionate eyes, by our green and gold supporter. Geoff Marsh, although representing Australia well, was no match at all for David Boon in Grandma's eyes.



Grandma with Mia

When Grandma had a turn last Friday, my daughter Jenny was with her. Grandma lost consciousness for some period of time but on regaining consciousness when the ambulance arrived was concerned about two things – have they found Dub? And was Mia with the kittens?

She loved animals and in particular cats. Mia was a cat given to her who had just produced 5 beautiful kittens, Dub was a cat belonging to a special family whose master had to go to hospital and Ruth had gone to pick up Dub, but Dub couldn't be found.

She spent the last two days of her life in hospital. During her stay her concern was for others. She was concerned, even though very sick, that she was not good company – that she

was “a bit of a dud”. She was always bright, very rarely complained. She touched many people with her warmth, sincerity and obvious feeling towards the welfare of others.

Grandma knew why she was on earth and had a deep faith. She would pull herself out of bed on winter mornings despite her arthritis, osteoporosis and chronic bronchitis. She loved her church and the friends she made there, and most Sundays apologized to us for inconveniencing us to take her to her church.”

This is an excellent summary of Mum’s life but now, especially for those family members who didn’t know her, or who were very young at the time, I would like to expand on her life a little. The year 2008 is the 100th anniversary of her birth and it seemed like a good way to commemorate the life a very special person.

“Grandma” loved people and none more than her children, George and myself, her son-in-law, Gary, her daughter-in-law, Ruth and her grandchildren, Andrew, Jenny, Carolyn, Sara and Kylie. Others who were very special to “Grandma” were several ‘adopted’ grandchildren, especially Julian who she thought of as one of her own, but also Mike, Nick and Nat Sky, Katherine and Belinda Bennett and Matt and Rach Lynch. Another person who was very special to Mum was her niece Sue, who had lost her own Mum when she was only 13.

Mum and Sue had a very special relationship and consequently Sue’s girls, Katie, Sophie, Jessie and Sarah were very important people in Mum’s life. Mark and Pam who are “currently” the only two marriage partners of Grandma’s grandchildren, unfortunately only came on the



scene after her death, but she would have loved you just as I do and she would have had a couple of special things in common with you. She shares the same birthday as Pam and a love of cricket with Mark. I often think how she would have loved talking cricket with you Mark!





ONE

A Happy Childhood

DOREEN (she hated her name!) was born the second child of William (Bill) and Grace Harrod on 13th June 1908. At the time the family lived in rented accommodation at Elliott Street, Balmain but moved in 1910 to Palmer Street still in Balmain. In 1913 they moved again to Belmore Street, Rozelle and in 1919 to Cary Street, Drummoyne. In 1924, after Grace was left a small legacy from an aunt, they bought their first house, 50 Prince Edward Street, Gladesville where they lived until 1966. I remember Mum saying that when her mother received the legacy her father wanted to put it into the ‘business’. Grandma burst into tears (which apparently was quite rare) and consequently they bought a house instead!

“The business” was an engineering firm, Weir and Harrod which was started in 1913 by Doreen’s father, Bill and his brother-in-law John

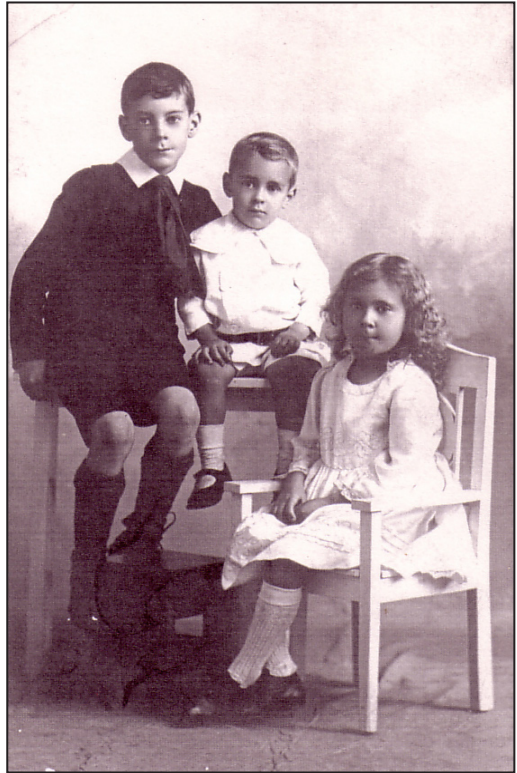
(Jock) Weir and was situated in Carey Street Drummoyne. John Weir left the partnership the following year, to return to his family's property and take control after the death of his brother. There was one story Mum told about those early days at Weir and Harrod which I will repeat in her own words:

"My father must have been a very forbearing parent!! The only time I can remember him being really upset with me was when we were living in Drummoyne, near his workshop in 1920.

The shop was on the waters edge and next door was a boatbuilders workshop, Deerings. Mr Deering had rowing boats for hire and an enclosed swimming pool. We were allowed to swim in the pool, so this particular afternoon I and Ruby Stern (next door neighbour) were down there and to our surprise the gate of the pool was open and there was a nice rowing boat tied up to the slip. No-one was about, so we borrowed the boat and set off down the Parramatta river, under the Iron cove Bridge, and on to Rodd Island. We were doing very well, but time was passing so we thought we'd better turn for home. Unfortunately for us going home was much harder because we were rowing against the tide. We got nearly back to the Bridge, very tired girls and were delighted to see Dad and Mr Deering rowing towards us. They towed us the rest of the way home and I can assure you we were most unpopular and didn't try such things again. I remember I went to bed without any dinner and poor Ruby fared even worse."

In the early days of the business Grace looked after the books and accounts at home and then Doreen worked in the office during 1927 until September when she was hit by a car whilst getting out of a tram which resulted in her damaging her shoulder and losing several fingers and spending a month in Balmain hospital. She then spent three months with her aunt and uncle, Rita and Frank Bunting on Norfolk Island. Her descriptions of, and love for Norfolk Island gave me a great desire to visit it which I managed to do just recently. Doreen returned to Weir and Harrod in June 1928.

In the beginning Weir and Harrod specialized in making machinery for the soapmaking industry. Doreen's younger brother, Ross joined the company in 1947 and took over as managing Director in 1951. William continued working in the factory, making all the wooden casting patterns and repairing workshop machinery, making new parts for lathes etc. as parts could not be bought after the war. He also made a rotary clothes line before "Hills" invented theirs and made hedge clippers before anyone else, a very clever man.



Jim, Ross and Doreen

The rotary clothesline we had at ‘Anglebar’ was the first one ever made by Grandpa and from memory was very like the ‘Hills’ one. Pity he didn’t patent it – he might have made a lot of money.

Weir and Harrod has since been through many different phases and today is still manufacturing packaging machinery and still employs family members.

Mum had a happy childhood with her two brothers, Jim who was older and Ross who was younger. She particularly enjoyed her visits to her Meldrum grandparents in Junee and had many special memories of those times like:

“Helping grandpa feed the horses and chooks and the lovely smell of the feed room. Being a ‘sulky’ child and grandpa telling me that only horses need sulkies. Having to eat everything Auntie Gert served me and hating porridge and meat most of all. Playing with the Weirs (cousins), who were there quite often and thinking how lucky they were because they liked porridge! The tennis parties at “Kinross” (the family home), Auntie Jean’s music pupils, playing cards, visiting country homes with the aunts, going shopping at Meldrums store where Grandpa would give us lollies etc etc”.

She remembered one time when Grandma Meldrum was staying with them at Gladesville and asked Mum to go and buy her the paper, which she did very ungraciously. That same night Grandma had a heart attack and died (1918). Her mother and father went to Junee for the funeral and she and her cousin Helen Weir stayed behind minded by their Auntie

A HAPPY CHILDHOOD

Alice who made them each a white voile dress for mourning. Helen's had pink ribbon threaded through it but Mum's had black because she was a big girl!!

Her memories of school days included getting the cane when she was eight years old because she had persuaded her mother to let her stay home for her birthday but the school headmistress was not amused and she got the cane!! She was at Rozelle Public School at the time.



Doreen and Pup





TWO

From Teenager to Adulthood

HIGH SCHOOL YEARS WERE spent at Fort Street Girls High and she remembers catching the ferry into the city from Hunters Hill in 1924 and watching the progress of the building of the Harbour Bridge. She passed the Intermediate Certificate in 1924 and gained the Leaving Certificate in 1927 in English, Geography, Modern History, Dressmaking and Mathematics. She gained an A for dressmaking which doesn't surprise me as she was a wonderful seamstress. I remember, among other things, the fantastic costumes she used to make for George and I for the yearly Girilambone 'Fancy Dress Ball' for the children in the district which was always a lot of fun.

Mum was always a great walker. When she was quite elderly she was still walking everywhere to catch buses or trains to the various places she wanted to go and it appears that as a young girl she also did lots of

walking. She tells of times such as the long walks with her cousins in Junee for instance. Then there was the time in 1925 after a Shakespeare play in the city, four of them walked from Central Station, via Glebe, White Bay and Rozelle to Drummoyne.

From there they caught a tram the rest of the way. This was in the middle of the night – certainly not safe nowadays and even then her parents were not at all happy about her adventure. Another time a group of her and her friends walked from Moss Vale to Nowra!!! A distance of 170 km plus they climbed Mt Camberwarra. She says *“We had one car to carry luggage, food and tents. I was the only girl to walk the full distance (The others had spells in the car)”* – yeah! Thata girl!!

A walk they did regularly was from Ryde tram terminus to Eastwood, to visit Grandpa Harrod and the aunts. They would stop halfway at the water tanks to eat their morning tea and then continue on. She recalls one evening arriving back at Ryde to discover Ross (the youngest) was not with them so her father had to go back looking for him. He was found walking slowly along, picking up pennies, he had dozens of them, pockets and hands full. Some unfortunate person must have dropped them as a penny was worthwhile in those days.



**Judy and Doreen
at Wyong**

Other stories I remember Mum

talking about from those teenage and early twenties years were visits to Collaroy and Whale Beach. Her Aunty Rita and Uncle Frank who she stayed with at Norfolk Island were by then living at Whale Beach and Mum used to visit them regularly. I remember going to their place as a child and for the first time in my life seeing koalas in the trees nearby which was very exciting. Friends of the Harrod family, the Brittons owned a holiday cottage at Collaroy and by the sounds of it there were many happy weekend house parties held there.

Mum also played a lot of tennis, both competition and socially. Tennis parties were a great social activity for young ones and her interest in tennis continued throughout her life. When she lived at Girilambone she played regularly in the local competition and with her doubles partner, Joan Skinner they made a formidable pair winning lots of comps.

Mum attended Hunters Hill congregational church as a young woman and along with her father and brother Ross was a member of the church choir. She also belonged to Hunters Hill Girls club, the Red Cross and Voluntary Air Observers.



**Doreen and
friends**



**Doreen in VAD uniform
1941**

As a member of the Voluntary Air Observers she would spend many evenings during the war on top of buildings watching for and spotting enemy planes. Her father was also a volunteer air observer and they quite often watched together – I’m not sure when they found time to sleep! I have a notebook in which Mum had detailed the different characteristics of certain planes that they had to watch for. For example : “Kittihawk – Low Single engine fighter, long nose, straight leading edge”. This was of course, in addition to working full time during the day.

She also belonged to the VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment), a unit belonging to the army, which helped wounded soldiers in hospital and with rehabilitation. She had qualifications from the Australian Red

cross in First Aid and Home Nursing, Canteen and Invalid Cooking. From 1937 to 39 Doreen did an Interior Decorating Course at East Sydney Tech followed by a course in Drawing and Tracing in 1940. Her photo appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald Women's supplement on Tuesday December 10, 1940 at her drawing board with the following caption:

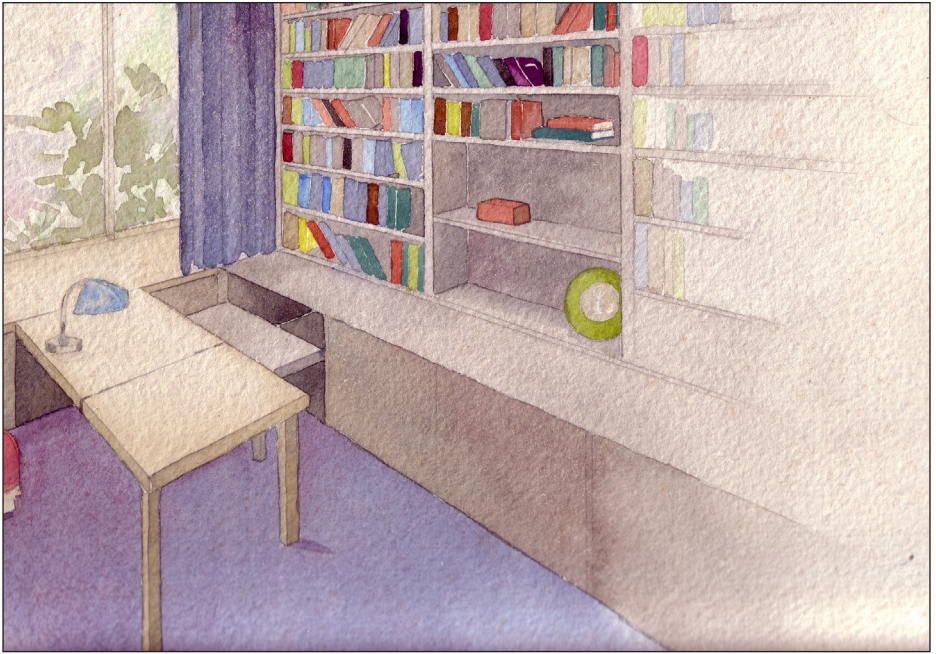
Young Sydney Artists Show Their Skill

Doreen Harrod working on her design for a bachelor flat. She also designed and printed the fabric in the background. She is a third-year interior decorating student.

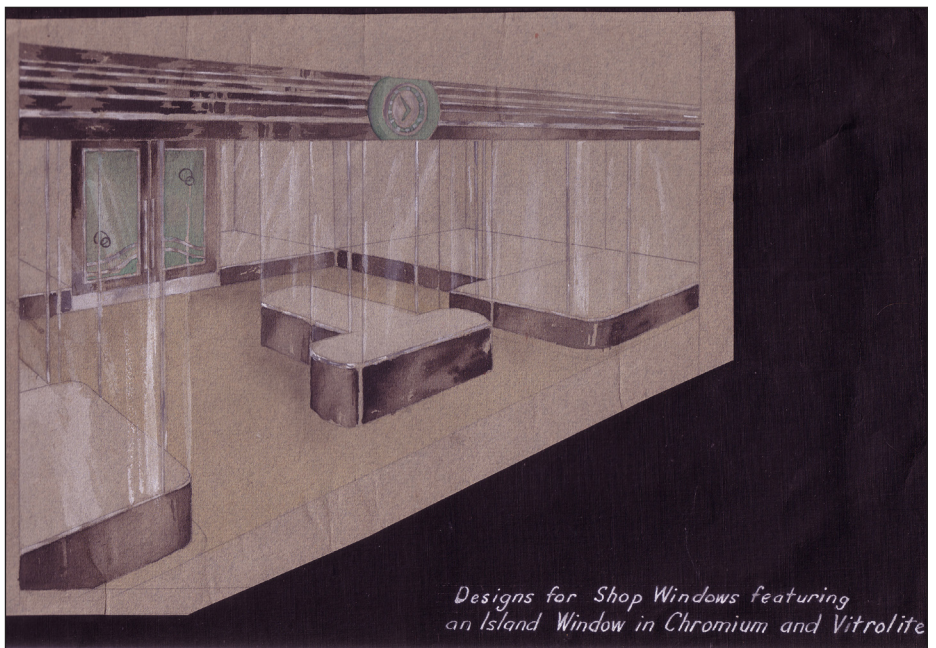


In 1940 she also started work as a Tracer in the AWA Drawing Office and in 1941 switched to the Radiophysics Lab which was part of National Standards Laboratory of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research and was located in the Sydney University Grounds. She says that during the war they often had to work back at night (I'm not sure if she meant her 'real' job or her 'voluntary' job) and the caretaker closed the main gates to the University at dusk, so they had to climb over the high gates to get out! Not long after joining Radiophysics as a Tracer she was promoted to Draftsman (the first female in NSW) with the National Standards Lab. She stayed there until just before her marriage.





Design for a home library







THREE

Romance and Marriage

DURING THESE YEARS THERE had been several romances but she was never very lucky in love. She told me the story of one man she was very much in love with, John Jaegar (who I think she worked with) who went to England for a year and asked Mum to wait for him until he came back. Communication and travel in those days were much more difficult than they are today and they wrote letters to each other but as most of the mail went by sea, letters would take months to arrive. He ended up being away over the original twelve months and one day Mum was at a tennis party with her brother Jim when one of their friends informed everyone that they had heard from John and that he had married an English girl. Mum of course was devastated. Fortunately she had a very caring brother who made their excuses as soon as possible and took her home. What an awful way to find out you had been passed over for someone else.

Another young man she was very close to was Bob Turner, who was the brother of one of her closest friends, and who she was expected to marry after the war, but he was killed in the war so that was another severe blow.

Then one day she met Harry Skinner. Dad had been born and brought up in Gulargambone and moved to a property at Girilambone in 1938. He had owned the property called “Anglebar” for several years before that but had continued working with his brother in their garage at Gulargambone. At the time Mum and Dad met, Mum was staying with her close friend Margaret Johnson who was also a Sydney girl who had met and married a grazier from a nearby property called “Bylong”. Mum says one day she saw a man riding up to the Bylong homestead on a horse and she had never seen a more handsome sight!! Dad was a great rider and always sat up so straight and proud on a horse so I can imagine how she felt when she saw him for the first time.



By the time they married on 16th February 1946 mum was 38 and Dad was 48. Below is an extract from the Nyngan Observer regarding Dad's "Bucks Party" which I think you men may find particularly interesting considering what I believe are the usual goings on at Bucks Parties today!!

"On Saturday night last, a smoke concert was tendered to Mr Harry Skinner in the Girilambone School or Arts supper room. The occasion was to honour the coming marriage of the guest of the evening to Miss Doreen Harrod, a friend of Mrs Ken Johnson, of Bylong, on the 16th February, at a city Presbyterian church.

About 30 local gentlemen attended, and Mr Frank Morley occupied the chair.

Appropriate toasts were drunk in chilled wine and 'May all his troubles be little ones' proposed by the chairman, was supported by Messrs. G. Gibson, K. Johnson, C. Grady, L. Dicker and Darby Wilson for Allan Spinks. Speakers referred in passing to the good neighbourliness of Harry, and his late Uncle Dick, and the sincere wish was expressed that the family continue to thrive, prosper and expand through this popular marriage.

Mr Ken Johnson proposed a toast 'To the Bride-elect', and Mr Max Johnson proposed 'The Married Men'. In supporting the single men in a toast, Mr Geo. Gibson remarked that soon may they wed and cause a repetition of the evening.

Humorous items, and of a high standard, were rendered by almost all present, while Mr Ted Skinner, Harry's popular uncle, thanked Girilambone people for the way in which they

had expressed their appreciation of his nephew and the name of Skinner.

The evening concluded by all joining in singing 'Auld Lang Syne' and the National Anthem."

Well boys – what do you think?!

Harry and Doreen were married at St Stephens Presbyterian Church, Macquarie Street, Sydney on 16th February 1946. Their attendants were Lorna Harrod (Doreen's sister-in-law) and Mac Skinner (Harry's brother). Their honeymoon was spent at Jenolan Caves but had to be cut short because Harry got something in his eye (he only had one having lost the other one in an accident with a piece of metal) and was unable to see. Fortunately a doctor fixed it



ROMANCE AND MARRIAGE



up but Harry was worried and so they left for home which was a four room house at “Anglebar”.





FOUR

Early Days at ‘Anglebar’

THE WAY OF LIFE ON properties in those days was very different to the modern day farm. The only electricity was provided by a 32 volt generator and batteries which was started each night to provide lights. I remember as a child that we had a kerosene fridge and a radio which ran on batteries. Ironing was done by heating irons on the fuel stove and as it was difficult to gauge the temperature I can remember scorching lots of things while I was learning to iron!!! Mum seemed to have mastered it very well by the time I came along but I think she had a few mishaps in the beginning too. The wood stove created a lovely warmth in the small house during winter but was very unpleasant during the summer months when temperatures could reach 40C or more and the stove still had to be lit as it was the only means of cooking. I remember when we eventually bought a gas stove to use in summer – it was wonderful!!! Mum was so delighted with it.

Washing day was a big day each week. A fire was lit under the copper in the outside laundry and all the sheets, towels etc were boiled along with work clothes and anything else that wouldn't be ruined in the boiling process. There was a hand wringer over the tub and that was a hard job, wringing all the sheets in particular. Mum managed all these manual jobs so well with her right hand which only had a couple of fingers after her tram accident. The worst thing that could happen on wash day was a dust storm when red dust would be blown up and cover everything. If we saw it coming there was a mad dash to get everything in off the line and close all the windows and doors. Even then the red dust would get in somehow. Keeping a dust free house was virtually impossible.

The phone was a 'party line' which meant there were 3-4 other properties on the same line so you couldn't use the phone if one of them was using the line – or you could listen in to their conversation if you were a sticky beak! The telephone exchange was only open certain hours. From memory I think it was 8am to 10pm Monday to Friday and up to midday Saturday and closed Sunday so you couldn't ring anyone outside those hours unless they were on your party line.

The little four room house had several additions over the years until it became quite a roomy and comfortable home with big verandahs on two sides and, most importantly, an inside bathroom and eventually even an inside toilet.

Up until that time the toilet was a pit toilet a fair way from the house so you tried very hard not to have to go there during the night!! This last addition in 1955, which included a loungeroom with an open fire, two more bedrooms and the inside toilet were built when I was 7 years old so I remember them quite well and the joy it brought Mum to finally have a nice loungeroom where she could entertain.



Original house



Verandah added

I remember too that our governess at the time was Yvonne Morley, who became quite smitten by one of the builders. Bill Harrod was staying with us and he and I, the horrible little children that we were, used to creep up on them when they were trying to have a romantic moment and start giggling.

Mum tells of being very lonely in her first years at Anglebar. Sadly her good friend Margaret had left the district a short time after Mum went there.

One day Mum, Margaret and Margaret's husband Ken, along with some other neighbours were playing tennis when Ken suddenly had a heart attack. Mum was the only one with any first aid knowledge and she did what she could for him but unfortunately he died leaving a young wife and small daughter. Margaret and her daughter, Barbara moved shortly after Ken's death which left Mum without her good friend and struggling to fit into country life with the other wives of local graziers.

There were certain 'rules' in the country which Mum didn't know

about– being a city girl – but she was sometimes told quite clearly when she had done the wrong thing. For example one night they were at a ball at Girilambone and Llew Lamph asked Mum to dance, which would have been OK except that it was the ‘supper dance’ which meant that you usually go into supper with the person you are dancing with at the time. (This was still the case when I was going to balls so I knew the rules and you tried to dance with someone you really liked so you could sit with them for supper which was served at long trestle tables!) In Mum’s case she didn’t know about ‘the supper dance’ but her partner should have. Anyway his wife, Anne came up to Mum at the end of the dance with a look that could kill and said to Mum “Mrs Skinner, you NEVER have the supper dance with someone else’s husband”. Poor Mum was devastated.

The local community had been trying to match make between Dad and a local woman before Mum came on the scene so to make things even harder for Mum they seem to have treated her a bit like the enemy. This must have been a very difficult time for Mum, and I remember her saying that during that first year of marriage she used to go for a walk down to ‘the big tank’ and cry and ask herself ‘what have I done’. Life was just so different to



**Dorren and Harry at the ball in
Girilambone 1947**

EARLY DAYS AT 'ANGLEBAR'

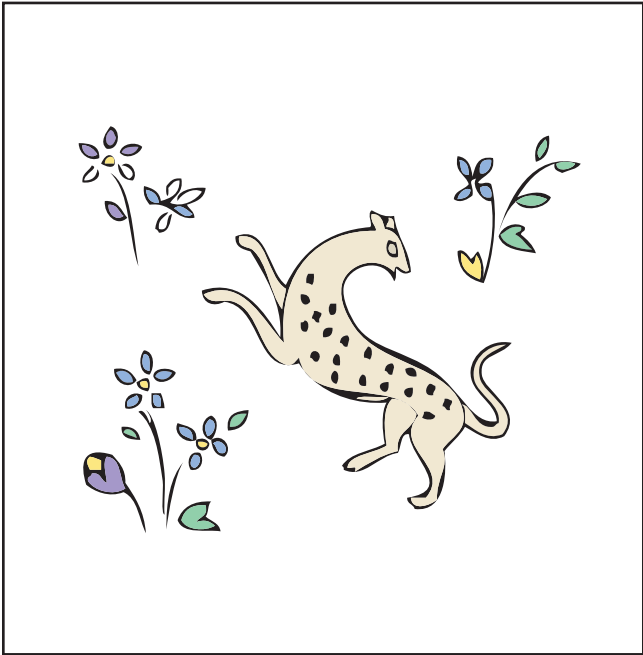
what she had been use to and of course to and of course she missed her friends and family who were now so far away.

Fortunately over time Mum got to know these women through church, CWA and Red Cross meetings and some of them, including Anne Lamph, became her very dear and close friends.

The CWA and Red Cross were very dear to Doreen's heart and she worked tirelessly for them over many years and was a Life Member of both. She held the positions of President, Treasurer and Secretary of the local Girilambone branch on many occasions. When she moved to Sydney after Harry died she continued her association with these organizations by joining the local branches at Normanhurst and Hornsby and was a member of both until her death.



**Big tank at 'Anglebar' built by Harry with
bullock team**





FIVE

Life on the Land Can be Interesting!

AS MUM BECAME MORE ACCEPTED by the other women and also the arrival of myself and then George (known for many years as Geordie because Mum thought George was a very severe name for a little boy), things improved immensely and she started to really enjoy country life. Friends from Sydney started to come and visit and Grandma and Grandpa were regular visitors. Grandma used to go with Mum to her meetings and other social events while she was staying and became well known and well loved by the community.

Social events included visiting each others homes for dinner or lunch, tennis parties and picnic race meetings. Garden parties were also held, usually to raise money for one of the charities such as the Red Cross. The picnic race days were great fun and were usually followed by a ball at night.

These days/nights were still very popular and well attended when I was a teenager and were attended by everyone from teenagers to the older generations. Dad owned several race horses while I was growing up and Mum described that time:

Harry was very keen on horses like the rest of his family, and owned several race horses in the 1950's. He owned Vayu, a chestnut, Glenangle, a bay, Brother Andrew, a chestnut and Cold Winter, a bay. They won quite a few races around the district at Nyngan, Girilambone, Coolabah, Hermidale and Marra. He gave up race horses, when told by a shopkeeper, George Shalhoub that Cold Winter was going to lose on the first day of a two day race meeting and then win on the second day, which is what happened. He thought that if a shopkeeper knew what his horses were doing and he didn't, it was time to give it up. (In other words the races were rigged!)



**Ruth, 'Vayu' and Doreen at Girilambone Picnic
Races**

Competition tennis was played between Girilambone, Coolabah, Hermidale and Byrock clubs and Mum was a very keen participant in both singles and doubles with her partner, Joan Skinner. Joan was the wife of Dad's nephew Jos and they lived a couple of miles out of Girilambone on the same road as us, close to where the copper mine had been. Their house had originally belonged to the mine. Mum and Joan won quite a number of trophies over the years. Between Mum and her tennis trophies and Dad with his horse racing trophies they managed to collect quite a few silver trays, jugs, serviette rings etc.

Life was never dull on the land and Mum had her fair share of interesting things happen to her. In May 1948 Grace and William, Doreen's parents were visiting. Ruth was three months old and in Doreen's words:

One afternoon we had a phonecall from Mr Grady, the postmaster, telling us a small boy, Max Walsh, only three years old, was missing in the bush near Coolabah. Harry, along with most of the men in the district collected at the place where he had been staying with an old man. The Coolabah police organized the search and when he wasn't found by nightfall, ordered everyone to rest and start again at dawn. At dawn they were to go in a certain direction, close together, combing the bush. However Harry, Paddy Cottee and Tom King were convinced the boy was in a different area, wandered off together accompanied by Harry's sheepdog, Snow. After some time Snow became interested in a fallen log and going over the men found the boy fast asleep and none the worse for his night out. Mary and Ella Hall came along in their car and picked them up.

Meanwhile back at Anglebar there was a baby to be fed

who needed milk, so my father and I baled up the cow and I attempted to milk her (the only time I have ever milked a cow). I got enough to feed Ruth and I was told later I was very lucky it was such a quiet cow, because I had the leg rope on the wrong leg and most cows would have objected”.

Another story she told happened a year later in 1949.

He looked old when I first saw him, Ike Lacey, about 1949. Harry had picked him up at Girilambone, drove him home and said to me ‘here’s old Ike again”.

It appears Ike used to turn up at Anglebar periodically, stay for several months and then take off and go on a mighty (drinking) spree. Then he would go on somewhere else, where no doubt the same thing happened.

While with us he lived in Morris’s hut, looked after himself (food provided by us) and when he wanted to go, he would ask Harry for his wages.

He was useful, helping Harry with the fences, in the shearing shed and in the garden, and he loved Ruth and George, and used to play with them. Ruth used to give him endless cups of ‘tea’, along with her dolls. It was quite common to see him with two or three hats on, as Ruth insisted people wear more than one hat.

Ike was an Englishman and when Harry suggested he should apply for the pension, he said he couldn’t because he was a sailor and had jumped ship in Sydney and had never registered

(also had never voted). Also he had a wife in London and was afraid she might find him and he surely didn't want that.

We saw him last about the middle 1950's in the Nyngan Hospital, where he died soon after. Harry paid for his funeral as he had nothing when he died, and he was buried at Girilambone.

I remember Ike very well and loved him dearly. He was the gentlest and nicest man, especially as he played 'houses' with me and would nurse my dolls, 'drink' the cups of tea I made him and 'eat' my mud cakes (not the chocolate variety – real mud). Of course I don't remember the seedier alcoholic side. He was like a grandfather to me.

Another 'interesting' visitor who came from time to time was Dad's sister, May. May was an alcoholic. She had never married and was sure Dad was going to always be around to look after her so when at the age of 50 he married Mum, May was not amused and found it very hard to forgive Mum! Nevertheless Mum was very kind to May and Dad did continue to try and help her. There was one occasion that I remember when Dad went over to Gulargambone and found May, who lived in the old family home, drunk and in a dreadful way. Dad wanted to bring her back to 'Anglebar' but she would have nothing of it so Dad literally picked her up and put her in the car and took her to 'Anglebar' where she locked herself in the bedroom by putting furniture against the door. Mum and Dad tried to coax her out but she was very stubborn. She refused all food and I think she must have snuck out during the night to go to the toilet because I watched that door very closely and she never appeared!!! She eventually came out but it was several days and she was still really angry with Dad but at least she was sober and she did start to eat. She was actually a very sweet lady when she wasn't affected by alcohol and I really liked her.

My Dad was one of the most generous men I have ever known. He would never let anyone go hungry or be without. Ike wasn't the only one who often stayed with us. There were others from Girilambone. One in particular was John Chant whose father was an alcoholic but a good shearer. Dad often gave work to Jim (the dad) or John and even at times we had a couple of the girls from the family working in the house. Mrs Chant would phone Dad or see him when he was in town and tell him she couldn't buy food for the family because Jim had spent it all on grog and Dad would inevitably find work for one of them – if it was Jim, Dad would take him home to our place and 'dry him out' for several days before he could start work!

Then there were the Italian and Greek migrants who had to spend a certain amount of time working in the country before they could get their citizenship. The four Italians were burr cutting and a nice group of men. Grace Harrod (mum's mother) was staying at the time and she started teaching them to speak English. When they left the three Greek fellows arrived and in Mum's words:

“They weren't much good so Harry sent them packing when one of them bailed me up in the pantry”

Life on the farm was never dull – I remember another time when Mum was in hospital with pneumonia – she suffered a lot with chest infections – and the governess we had at the time to teach George and I our correspondence school, tried to seduce Dad. She left quite quickly too!!

For a young lady who had grown up in Sydney and had friends in quite high places – some of her friends and friends of her family were well known professional people and she had been used to a life of tennis

LIFE ON THE LAND CAN BE INTERESTING!

parties, theatre and house parties – she adapted to country life in amazing ways and grew to love it.

She said in her own notes about her life:

“I loved the life in the country and often helped Harry with the sheep, drafting, dipping etc and twice spent days bringing mobs of sheep from Nyngan, camping on the way.”



Doreen and Georgie



**Doreen and Ruth
1949**

I remember one of these droving trips. For a young child like myself it was a lot of fun but I'm sure it wasn't so much fun for Mum and Dad. We spent all day walking along behind the sheep which were kept well in line by Dad's very able sheepdogs and we only stopped for meals and to sleep. We had 4 bunks on the back of the truck and that was where we slept, under the stars. It was wonderful.

Sometimes when it was really hot we would also sleep this way at home. Dad would put the beds on the back of the truck and we'd all sleep out there to get some relief from the heat. Strangely I don't remember mosquitos being a problem. I just remember the whole family being together and Mum and Dad teaching George and I what the different stars were until we fell asleep.

As for most children, Christmas was a very exciting time for us. Many of our Christmas lunches were spent with the Larsen family. Ned and Edna were great friends of Mum and Dad and because we didn't have relatives in the district to spend Christmas with, they often invited us to join their family and I remember these days as being a lot of fun.

One in particular comes to mind but I'll let Mum describe it:

"One Christmas Day when we were visiting Ned and Edna Larsen, we were sitting out on the lawn after a lovely Christmas dinner, when Keith Larsen said, 'I can see smoke'. So the men raced into Girilambone and sure enough there was a big fire raging on the other side of the town. The men all drove out to it, and spent the night fighting the fire, and we the women and children slept on Larsen's lawn'.

That was so much fun!!

LIFE ON THE LAND CAN BE INTERESTING!

Bushfires were a fairly common occurrence and some of them were very big and bad. The women used to gather in the town hall and make sandwiches to feed the men who all went of to fight the fires with tanks of water on the back of their trucks: no bush fire brigades just great community spirit.



George, Doreen and Ruth



George and Harry





SIX

From Feast to Famine

THE 1950'S WERE QUITE PROSPEROUS years on the land with good wool prices which allowed Mum and Dad to do the extensions to the house, buy race horses and some shares in Weir and Harrod. They also bought a Plymouth car and a jeep (an old one which had belonged to the army) and put up new boundary fences on two sides of the property.

These were the years when it was great to live on the land and George and I had a fantastic childhood with happy and contented parents. Mum often had help in the house and as I have already mentioned Dad often had various men to help with whatever needed to be done outside to keep the property at peak condition.

Sadly in the 1960's things started to go bad. George and I were both

at boarding school which put a lot of strain on already diminishing finances. Wool prices were falling and accompanied by a very severe drought between 1965 - 1966, life on the land became stressful and difficult. Dad carted water for over 12 months and cut foliage off trees to try and keep the stock alive. The garden which Mum had put a lot of time into and which she loved, virtually disappeared for lack of water – all the roses and lawn in particular, as well as Dad's fruit trees and grapevines. In 1968 conditions started to improve but wool prices continued to fall.

Somehow Mum and Dad managed to keep George and I at school and I finished in 1964 and started nursing in 1965. I was home for about six months in early 1965 and I remember the strain Mum and Dad were under. The government provided some kind of drought relief which had to be worked for – it wasn't a handout. Mum and some of the other women worked long hours painting the local town hall, cleaning up and painting the childrens playground and other community work and earned a little money to help with the household finances. I remember the dreadful days when they had to go to the Bank in Bourke to negotiate loans, never knowing if they would be able to keep going or not. These years took there toll on both Mum and Dad health wise and I'm sure put a lot of strain on their relationship.

The one good thing that happened during this time was that 240V electricity came in 1968 which meant the end of starting the generator every night and for the first time TV was available, even though reception was very poor.

In 1972 the wool cheque was \$2,200 from about 3000 sheep which didn't even cover the cost of shearing and with a whole year to go before any more income. By this time I had married (in 1969) and moved to

Gunnedah. George was at home on the property and it was a very sad and difficult time. Dad remained as active as his declining health would allow and he died on October 27th 1975 at the age of 77. He was at home at 'Anglebar' – the place he loved and never wanted to leave. Mum, George and I were with him as well a very young Andrew (3) and Jenny (1). Dad absolutely adored his grandchildren and I remember that almost the last thing Gary told Dad before he had left to return to Sydney several days earlier was that we were expecting our third child (Carolyn) and he was very excited about that. The decision was made to sell 'Anglebar' shortly after Dad's death. Mum and George moved to Sydney where George started work at Weir & Harrod and he and Mum bought a house at Normanhurst. We had also moved to Sydney at the end of 1972 when Gary commenced work at Weir and Harrod. It was lovely to be living once again within a short distance of one another.



Doreen with her geraniums in 1977





SEVEN

Full Circle

COMING BACK TO SYDNEY WAS bitter sweet for Mum. She had started out a city girl but had become very much a country woman. She missed her friends at Girilambone but enjoyed spending more time with her friends from her youth such as Tissie Bucknell, Molly Burns and Helen Turner, and of course she loved being close to her grandchildren.

Mum was determined not to be a burden to anyone and immediately set about making a life for herself back in Sydney. She joined the local branches of the CWA, Red Cross and Historical Society and joined the Normanhurst Presbyterian Church (later Uniting Church). She traveled everywhere by bus or train and told us fascinating stories of the people she met while waiting at bus stops or train stations!

While living at Normanhurst Mum's older brother Jim died very suddenly at his home in Adelaide which was a shock to all and Mum felt his loss very much. He had always been an enormous support to Mum even to the extent of helping out financially during the very difficult years at "Anglebar" and she missed him very much.

When George married Ruth in 1980 George turned part of the house at Normanhurst into a 'Granny flat' for Mum where she stayed until George and Ruth decided to move back to the country. At that time we bought a house at Cherrybrook and made part of it into a 'Granny flat' and Mum came to live with us.

Mum continued to attend her various meetings – still getting to most of them by bus. Gary continued to teach Sunday School at Normanhurst (which he had been doing while we lived at Thornleigh) so Mum continued to go with him to attend church. She made an effort to get to know the neighbours in Penrose Avenue and Elliott Place where we lived and became well known and much loved. By this time I was working two to three days a week at Weir and Harrod so Mum was the one who often greeted the children when they arrived home from school. She was a huge help to me – always having cakes made for the childrens lunches, doing a lot of my washing and ironing etc.

Mum often told me how much she enjoyed living with us and it was also a wonderful opportunity for Andrew, Jenny and Carolyn to get to know their grandmother much better. They all had an amazingly close relationship with her. She went to all their sports days at school, concerts, Brownie and Cub Scout events, Andrew's rugby and loved every minute of it all.

It is only now that I am a grandmother myself that I realize what an

amazing woman she was in many regards, but particularly in her ability to ‘keep her mouth shut!’ It must have been so difficult but she never interfered with the way we disciplined the children, or lack thereof! They would go to her for love and sympathy when I was ‘being mean’ and they would receive love and sympathy but she would always back up Gary or myself and never tell us how we should be doing things. Similarly with Gary’s and my relationship, she would never take sides if we were having differences of opinion.

We lived in Cherrybrook for 7 years and then moved to Annangrove to have more space. Having been bred in the country, Gary and I both had a longing for more room around us. We had begun to feel quite claustrophobic living so close to neighbours. We bought a property of approx 8 acres from Harry Cooper, a well known vet in the area, largely because of his appearance in a weekly television show, “Burkes Backyard” and later his own animal shows.

We had decided to turn the property into a boarding cattery and Mum was all for the idea. She loved the idea of ‘being back in the bush’ and once again we were able to convert part of the house into a Granny Flat for her. By this time our children were all in high school and Mum’s health was deteriorating. She still had numerous chest infections – a legacy from a bout of measles when she was a teenager – and had by now also become somewhat disabled by arthritis and osteoporosis.

Her health did not slow her down too much though. When we first started the cattery I had to continue working at Weir & Harrod and Mum was left to look after the cattery for much of the time – cleaning, feeding, looking after customers, the phone etc and she did an amazing job. I remember many a cold winter morning lying in bed thinking I must get up and get going and I’d hear Mum’s footsteps on the path outside my bedroom heading down to start work. By this time she

was over 80. She didn't go out as much but still caught the bus when she did want to go somewhere – often coming home on the same bus as all the school kids (what a nightmare!!).



**Doreen's 80th Birthday
1988**

When Gary stopped teaching Sunday School at Normanhurst, Mum had joined the Presbyterian Church at Cherrybrook where she felt very welcomed and cared for so when we moved to Annangrove I would drop her at her church on my way to my church and collect her on the way home!

Mum's health continued its downward spiral and pain became a constant companion. She had always had a great love of books so spent much of her time reading, sitting in her rocking chair with her beloved cat Mia on her lap. She loved cricket so summer was a good time for her. She watched all the games on TV that she possibly could. She also continued to help me in the cattery.

I remember one day when she was feeling particularly low about what she thought was her lack of usefulness and feeling she had lived longer than she should have. We were sitting at the kitchen table and the conversation was becoming quite heavy until Andrew said – "Dad said it is going to take us five years to get the cattery up and going and so far it has only been 3 so you're not going anywhere for another 2 years!" It was the perfect thing for him to say and the mood immediately changed and Mum laughed and promised she wouldn't. Sadly it wasn't to be another 2 years. My beloved Mum left us to be with her Lord on 30th May 1993.

As Gary remarked in his testimony to Mum's life even during those last few days she was thinking of others. Mia had produced five kittens the week before Mum died and even that had a story to it! Mum had put a box in the loungeroom for Mia because we knew her time was coming but Mia had other plans for the birth of her babies. She jumped up on Mum's bed and began to give birth so Mum climbed out of bed and took her into the longer room and 'the box', and Mum went back to

bed. A short time later in came Mia again. This routine went on several more times I believe until finally Mum decided she would have to stay up with Mia while she gave birth – so a week before Mum died she was playing midwife to her precious Mia and the next morning she and Mia presented us with five beautiful kittens and Mum looked as proud as Mia!!

There is one other story regarding Mia which must be told. One day Mum and I were out shopping and Julian was in his room studying (which happened to be in fairly close proximity to the septic tank). He thought he heard to cat crying but after looking around and not seeing anything he tried to ignore it. However the wailing continued and poor Julian finally discovered Mia ‘swimming’ in the septic tank. He pulled her out and tried to clean her up as best he could and took her to the Vet before we got home because he knew how upset Mum would be. After about a dozen baths and lots of nice smelling shampoo Mia finally began to smell OK again. Poor Julian! I think it is safe to say it was love of Grandma and not of Mia that prompted him to make such a difficult and unpleasant rescue!!



**Weir and Harrod shareholder's meeting
1990**

**Gary, George, Bill and Helen Harrod
Ruth, Doreen, Sue Denman, Jo Harrod**





EIGHT

Hard Work Completed

MUM GREW UP IN AN ERA when many people lived by the principle that there were two things in life which were private and which you didn't talk about – politics and religion.

She did, however grow up in a home where the family attended church regularly and Mum, her brother Jim and her father were all members of the choir at their local congregational church.

My childhood memories of Mum's faith in God centre around our bedtime prayers and going to church with her in Girilambone once a month. The closest Presbyterian minister had to come from Warren so we only had church once a month.

When I was at boarding school Mum encouraged me to be confirmed and gave me a Bible but very little was actually said about God.

As I have already said Mum attended Normanhurst Presbyterian Church when she came back to Sydney and later the Presbyterian Church at Cherrybrook, but it wasn't until I became a Christian in 1989 that we actually started to talk about what it meant to be a Christian.

A few weeks before Mum died she raised the subject one evening when we were having our evening glass of wine before dinner. She was concerned that she would lose her faith before she died and when I questioned her about this she said that both her father and her brother Jim had turned away from the Lord before they died and she feared she would do the same. We discussed this and in the end I think she was reassured that because she believed that Jesus died for her sins and that she had been forgiven, she would spend eternity with Him.

The Lord Himself gave me the reassurance I needed when she died and I praise and thank Him for His love in doing that for me. The



morning after Mum died I woke early and got up and made myself a coffee and sat at the table thinking about Mum and obviously being quite tearful. I thought about our conversation regarding her faith and asked God in prayer if He would give me some assurance that Mum was now with Him. My Bible was on the table and I opened it and immediately in front of me were the words of Isaiah 40:

“Comfort, comfort my people, says your God, her hard service has been completed, her sins have been paid for, she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins”.

For the next few days every time I opened the Bible, it fell open at these words. I am not a believer in opening the Bible at random and expecting a “Word” from God but I do believe on this occasion He knew my distress and concerns and He answered my prayers by leading me to His Word. I am now convinced that Mum is with Jesus in heaven and all of us who believe will one day be reunited with her on that glorious day when Jesus returns or we go to be with Him.

