

"Spanning the Years"



Tea Gardens Family Research & Local History Inc

'The Cottage'

Cnr Myall and Yalinbah Streets

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ABN 95 947 789 163

MAY 2025 NO. 52

OPEN DAYS

Except Public and School holidays

MONDAYs

Cottage—

1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th—9.30am – Noon

Library—

3rd Monday 9.30am– Noon

SATURDAYS—

Tea Gardens Library 9.30—11.30am

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

To assist those researching their family history in a happy friendly manner.

To preserve, share and promote our community's local history.

PATRONS: Janis Winn & Owen Holbert

PRESIDENT: Judith Glover

VICE PRESIDENT: Lesley Turner

SECRETARY: Anne Shannon

TREASURER: Ros Bridger

HISTORICAL EVENTS: Linda McIntosh

LOCAL HISTORY: Anne Johnson

LIBRARIAN; Shirley Cox

COMMITTEE:

Margaret Munright

Garry Worth

Jenny Little

Diane Kiss

Fran Mitchell

Our appreciation to the Tea Gardens Country Club for allowing our group the use of the cottage.

We acknowledge the Worimi people, the traditional owners of the land on which we meet.

THE TOPIC FOR OUR JOURNAL THIS TIME, IS 'HOMES'

A brief outline from Wikipedia states: A **home**, or **domicile**, is a [space](#) used as a permanent or semi-permanent residence for one or more [human](#) occupants, and sometimes various [companion animals](#). It is a fully- or semi-sheltered space and can have both interior and exterior aspects to it. Physical forms of homes can be static such as a [house](#) or an [apartment](#), mobile such as a [houseboat](#), [trailer](#) or [yurt](#) or digital such as virtual space.

Here at Tea Gardens Family Research & Local History, we are trying to foster our members to write stories to add to their 'tree'. A 'tree' has branches as we all know and I am sure our future readers will be thrilled to know their family line has gone back to the 1600-1700's or even further but, what would be far more interesting is to know how and where they lived, what they did for a living, what was the place like? Did they grow their own food? What did the wife do when her husband/partner departed this life? Most husbands seemed to marry quickly after the wife died as they needed someone to help raise the children. Were they convicts, been in jail, a community member who may have had a 'write-up' in the local paper, did they leave money under the milk jug for the milkman. Was there an Obituary written on their death? This added information makes the lives of our ancestors come to life, not just a name and date on a page.

There are so many avenues open to us today for easy research to make our history interesting. *You don't have to include long lists of names and dates.* To get started, choose a topic/person. I chose to write what I remembered about my grandmother. It was slow at first, but little memories started to surface and before long I had filled a page. Your story doesn't have to become a book, just interesting facts you remember about yourself and your subject. That page then led on to what I remembered about my grandfather, and so it went on to other incidents which came to mind. It is a good idea to write a short story on yourself, before we forget what our childhood was like—so different from today and what it will be 'tomorrow'.

This Journal about homes, had me remembering our first home as a married couple and it was a joy to sit and reminisce and remember.

I do hope you all enjoy reading some of the stories from our members and that these might inspire you to write your own stories.

Judith Glover

President TGFR&LH Inc



Where Did They Go?

Listen! Listen! Harken your ears
Trace back the footsteps. Trace back the years.

Listen! Listen! Time has rewind
Footsteps are echoing with voices and sounds

Look! Look! Children are playing
Running and laughing. 'What are they saying?'

Up! Up! Look up at the smoke
The mother is busy keeping house for her folk.

Smell! Taste! The dust and the flies
The salt of their sweat, the staleness of sighs.

Ask! Ask! Where did they go?
Why did they leave and how is it so?

Gaze at these ruins and ponder within
The family that lived, the noise and the din.

Imagine their thoughts, their wants and their dreams
Their love for this house and all that it seemed.

Wander these walls and stand in each room
Soak in their strength and cast out the dark gloom.

These ruins were once the hub of a life -
the dream of a husband, a family, a wife.

Christine Cameron

Reprinted with permission from Christine Cameron

MY GRANDPARENT'S HOME



Initially living with relatives in Newtown after arriving from England, my grandparents John and Elsie, purchased a quarter acre block of land in Bankstown covered in dense bush and huge gum trees for 16/- per foot (\$1.60). The steam train ran from Sydney to Bankstown and the land was one mile from the station approached by a dirt track with deep ruts.

Two small tents were purchased, two cots, double bed, and kitchen utensils, gathering enough together to set up camp in September 1913. The larger tent was for sleeping the other for storage and supplies. Their only neighbour agreed to let them have 4 gallons (18L) of water in a kerosene tin per day until they could start collecting water for themselves. The open air fireplace made of clay walls on three sides with iron bars across the top was the kitchen stove and in rainy weather a hand held umbrella served as a roof while the dinner cooked. They were very frugal with the 4 gallons of water as it had to last five people for daily needs, drinking, cooking, bathing and washing clothes including baby's nappies. John was working as a blacksmith in Sydney and washed at work to get rid of the worst grime before coming home. When he arrived home he had another wash in the dish of water set aside for the whole family before having his dinner. Next morning he used the same dish of water being very careful scooping up clear water on the top without disturbing dirt settled on the bottom before throwing it away. It was a festive occasion when it rained, anything that could hold water was put out to catch every drop possible. Everyone and everything was given a thorough scrubbing and rinsed off. Peg marks stood out plainly on their clothes after being washed and dried on the line as ironing was one task Elsie did not have to do in her bush camp.



My grandparents John & Elsie

When John left for work Elsie set about making beds and taking care of her chores. During the heat of the day she sat in the shade of the huge trees with the children, then at night the beds had to be pulled apart to check for biting, crawling things before they retired for the night. Ants, flies, mosquitoes, snakes, spiders and lots of creepy crawling creatures together with the heat Elsie had never known in England, took in her stride.

John started to clear the land and had piles of bushes stacked up ready for burning. The butcher came around with his cutting cart selling meat and warned to "Quickly get rid of the piles of bushes as snakes breed in such places" he told Elsie. A very wild eyed stallion, mare and foal came galloping through the bush one day, Elsie terrified gathered the children and sought shelter in their flimsy tent until the animals moved on leaving them unharmed. What else might come out of that bush was a constant thought. A vegetable garden was made and their first crop of peas was ready to pick. Early in the morning while still in bed a loud munching woke them and to their horror a cow had wandered in and found the garden demolishing it completely. It was very clear that the next task was to erect a wire fence around the property to keep out unwelcome visitors.

Gradually enough money was saved for John to start laying the foundations for one room of their house, and

commenced building. He was a very versatile and innovative young man and could set his hand to many tasks with proficiency. Xmas 1914 was celebrated in the room, complete with a built-in fuel stove. Elsie was thrilled, not only did she have the luxury of a proper stove with an oven, but a roof to start catching their own water supply. For 18 months they had been living in the tents.

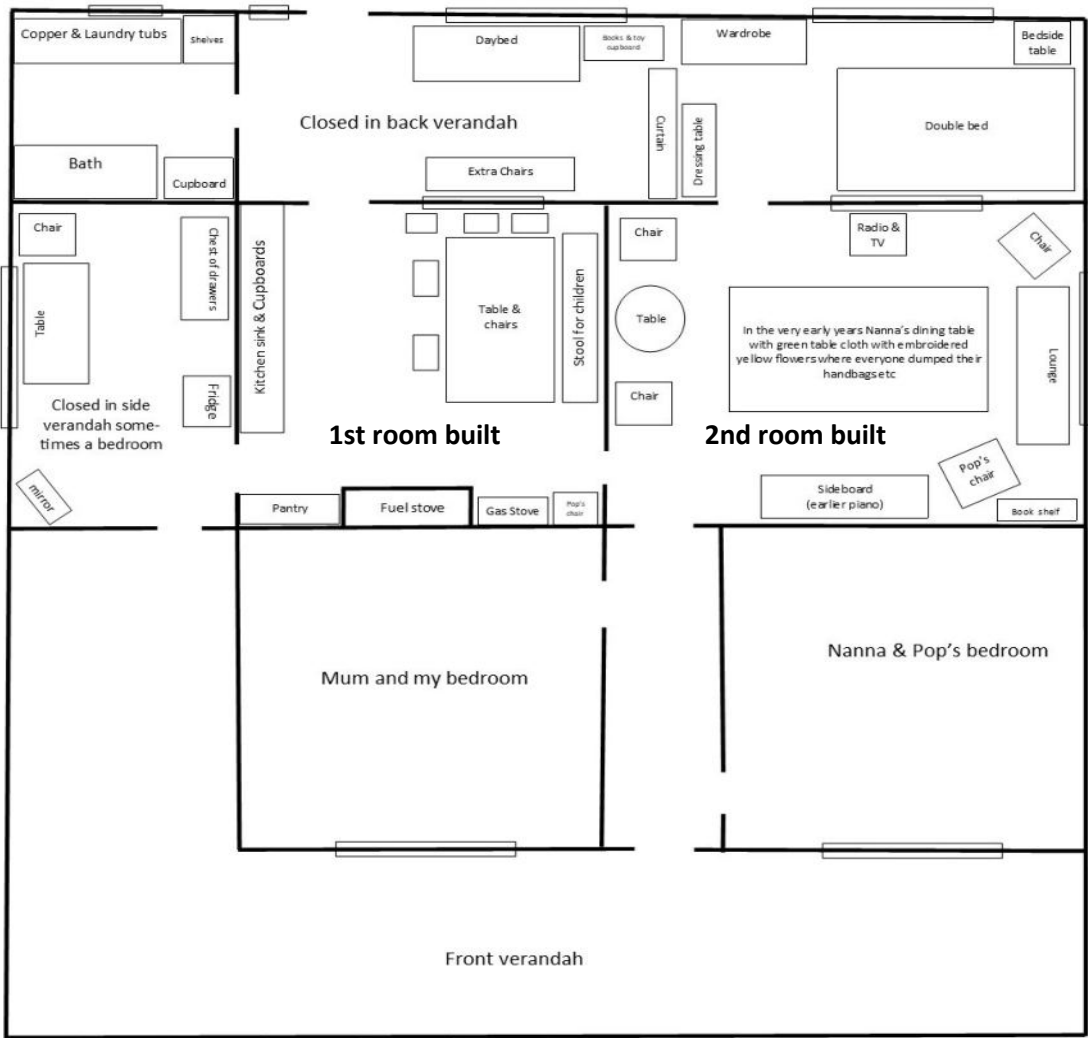
By July 1916 a second room was added where my mother was born and gradually as money could be spared further rooms were built until the completed home was quite substantial and very homely.

This is the home where I grew up after my mother was widowed in 1944 and lived there until I married.

Lesley Turner



Back view with solar and wind power clothes line to dry the washing across the width of the yard supported with props —and it worked extremely well.
The toilet was moved from way up the back yard to its present position after the sewer was connected.





Fuel stove very similar to the one in the kitchen where Nanna cooked the most delicious meals and treats. Visitors invariable came in and immediately stood in front with their back to the warmth. I clearly remember my nightie being warmed on the oven door in the winter.



Washing day, usually Monday, the whites were boiled in the gas copper and transferred to the tubs to be finished off and rinsed in water with Ricketts Blue bag for extra whiteness. The copper was also used to boil multiple Xmas puddings. On one occasion a cloth came untied causing considerable annoyance.



Lesley on the left with cousins who had moved into the house next door - 1950



Early Kooka stove was installed when the gas supply was available



Cubby house played in by generations of children. Grandfather's workshop up the back built of

Lesley - Member: 11

THE HEATH

I'm very fortunate to be brought home, as a new born, to a lovely home build in the 1920s for my maternal grandparents. My parents were living there following my Dad's WW11 discharge.

The house was on a corner block and a stone topped veranda made a great lookout. The harbour bridge was partially visible at this time but closer to home, there was a park over the road.

"The Heath" dark brick, gable roof, lead light windows with 2-foot-wide window sills, just right to sit on and knit as mum and I often did.

Double brick plastered walls. A cool house in summer a snug warm home in winter. Two big bedrooms, dining room complete with Koze fire which burned coke, a fancy glass panelled interior door between dining and lounge room which, when open, made a great party room and a third bedroom for guests. The bathroom was tiled, had a claw foot bath, hand basin, a small wall hung medical cabinet with a mirror and towel rails. The kitchen was next to the dining area and had a fuel stove. Two corner cupboards had snazzy rounded doors and either side of the sink was a long terrazzo top to the cupboards. It was a deep dark red with occasional grey specks. I've always loved it. There was a handy sunroom next to the lounge room. A good spot for a day bed, a Singer treadle sewing machine and a cane table and chairs. This room led to the backyard. The clothes line was strung between two sturdy posts and a prop was used to push the line higher so it caught the nor'easter which blew the clothes and especially the sheets into spinnakers. A sight to see and never forgotten.

The WC was out the back behind the "wash house". Here we had a copper, and, of course, its stick, twin concrete tubs with a hand operated wringer attached and various size brooms, buckets and enamel basins. A cupboard with spare things, shoe polish, candles, sandsoap, rubber kneeling pad, scrubbing brush and cakes of sunlight soap, washing soda and mouse traps. Oh, and a homemade wooden peg box with dolly pegs and various lengths of white tape for hanging your "Good" clothes up on the line. This you threaded through the arms and put three pegs in the tape to keep the "garment in shape." And a cloth to give the line a going over to avoid dirty marks. Towels for when you washed your hair. Worked perfectly, a physical workout all in one place

The crowning glory. All the rooms had wooden picture rails and ceilings were lovely patterned with plaster cast decorations. My bedroom ceiling was special. A circle of eight chubby cherubs watched over me and I thought, from a very early age, how special to wake up and see them each morning.

A strong sturdy house, a loving home to us all.

Margaret – LM



***My Home
The Lodge
Domain Gates - Art Gallery Road, Sydney***



1953 to 1967

By a friend of Family Research

In 1953 my family moved into this cottage in The Domain when my father was appointed Foreman of The Domain managing 3-4 staff. With this position, part of the job included living in this cottage which has always housed the Foreman or Ranger responsible for the upkeep of The Domain including the staff assigned to the position. Offices, work sheds and stable were located at the rear of the cottage.

The cottage or 'The Lodge' as it is known, was built to house the Gate Keeper of the Domain where the road through the large iron gates led into the Royal Botanic Gardens and the Barracks. The gates were taken down during the war and never replaced.

The cottage is a sandstone block building erected in 1836 and designed by Mortimer Lewis. It has high significance in the architectural history of New South Wales and Australia. The Domain and attendant buildings are all part of the Royal Botanic Gardens. My father worked for the Royal Botanic Gardens from 1920 and this constituted his last promotion before retiring in 1967. Previously he had worked nearby at NSW Government House in the Gardens, interrupted between positions by WWII where he served on Morotai.

Despite from the roadside this cottage looks small, it actually extends a fair way back and has been known to house 3 extended parts of our family comfortably at one time with very young babies. This was a very busy family home and I started my life there at the age of 14. My sister was 12 years old. This meant I travelled to school from St James Station to Arncliffe High by train each day. Most of my formative adult years as a teenager were focused from this location. I was married from here at the nearby St Stephens church, which included preparation for myself and bridesmaid at The Lodge. The Lodge became a hub for not just my family but all our extended family and friends due to the central location. This included going to all Sydney city's entertainment venues such as The State Theatre, The Tivoli, and so many other venues that are no longer in existence.

The house was split-level in 4 stages. Each level was accessed by 3 steps down to the next level. There were two entrances from Art Gallery Road. The white door showing in the picture was only opened later in our stay. The main family entrance was the large wooden door beside the actual Lodge Gate Post. This is the large stone gate post that can be seen in the picture. When using the car we used the back entrance near the stables. I actually learnt to drive in the middle of the city in the 50s. Inside there were 4 very large bedrooms, an enormous kitchen, dining room, and 2 sitting rooms. The bathroom and laundry were weatherboard additions.

In 1954 whilst living there we were invited to observe Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip arriving at Man-o-War Steps. Very few people got to see this aspect of their arrival as the area was accessible by staff only. We also could see her every day passing between The Lodge Gates as they left Government House.

* * *

Oh the Memories & Disasters —our 1st HOME—39 Church Street, Cessnock



As purchased in 1966—



What we discovered after honeymoon

Purchased: £1,000—(\$2,200) along with a laminated kitchen table, 6 chrome vinyl matching chairs, 1 settee and a small Westinghouse refrigerator, plus odd vases and pots, an old sea trunk and some gardening tools.

Duration: August 1966—May 1970. **Sold:** \$7,250

Our first home which was built during the years of the Great Depression (1920s-1930s) was similar to another dozen houses in the street. It had two bedrooms, kitchen, lounge room, laundry, bathroom and enclosed back room which had two sets of blue louvre windows. The toilet was outside, and according to my mother, it was a good buy because it had a central bathroom which would be a good selling point in the future.

It looked as though the weatherboards had never been painted since new, the windows were the push-out type with tri-coloured glass in the top and bottom of each pane. The Malabar family, were the original owners, and had moved in after migrating from England via South Africa in the 1920s. Mr Malabar had died soon after moving in Mrs Malabar continued to live there with her handicapped daughter Margie. They were waiting for beds at “Cessnock House”, a retirement home for women, where Margie would be cared for after her mum’s passing. Two beds were available only weeks after we said we would purchase—*a miracle!*

We were able to take possession 8 weeks before we were married, so work soon started on getting it brightened up, walls painted etc. The walls consisted of Daido boards up a meter and a half then plaster above. Before we could paint, we decided to take out the fuel stove in the kitchen/eating room, which backed on to the fuel fed copper in the laundry. Each had its own chimney on the roof. With the help of a few friends and a truck borrowed from another friend, we knocked the kitchen fireplace down brick by brick and tossed them through the open window into the back of the truck, this saved double handling. We had shifted a great deal of the bricks from the floor level up to eye height, the chimney and surround hung through the roof into both rooms. We decided to call it a day and finish the task the next day. As we were about to pack up our ‘best-man’ decided to give one more swing and that was the final straw!!! The whole lot came crashing down, a couple of tonnes of bricks landed with an almighty thud like a bomb going off, shrapnel of bricks and mortar flew everywhere. The whole house looked as though it was on fire as dust and soot from 40 years belched out the windows and doors, covering the house next door with a fine coating of soot and dirt. When everyone was accounted for, we all looked like we had just finished a shift at the mine, the only thing white was the whites of our eyes. Needless to say, the job was finished much quicker than planned because there was a huge hole in the ceiling and roof as well as a huge mess on the floor. Our neighbour wasn’t at all impressed, especially as she had plans for her son to purchase the home when the family were resettled.

After this mess and before anything else could be done, our neighbours home had to be washed down thoroughly to get rid of all the grime from the chimney removal.

The dark stained Daido boards around the living rooms and hallway were eventually painted with “acquired” transformer paint, curtesy of the Hunter Valley County Council, where my brother and Rex both worked. This had the effect of killing the varnish and allowing the boards to be painted with an oil based paint to fill in the cracks not previously noticed with the dark stain.

The creamy brown walls had been painted with a Calcimine paint and were washed down with ‘sugar soap’, they

revealed a multiple of colours. First was a cherry colour and then blue. The first coat of paint peeled as we hadn't washed the sugar soap off properly, which now required another wash down.

We managed to get the main bedroom painted before we were married, silver grey on three walls with a feature wall of lilac, frilly curtains and a venetian blind.

The roof had been cement washed by a devious contractor which had partially washed off in the first lot of rain and had partially clogged up all the downpipes. A few on the roof the next day after the 'bucks' night were a bit the worse for wear, so Rex was tied to the remaining chimney to help clean the roof ready for undercoating. When we came home from our honeymoon, the roof had been painted green and new flooring where the fuel stove and copper had once stood. (courtesy of Rex's cousin).

The room which caused the most angst was the bathroom, as it only had a bath and chip heater. The handbasin was a plastic bowl suspended over the bath by a timber frame. As soon as we were able we had a Dux hot water heater installed and at the same time another one installed under the new kitchen sink. The whole house needed rewiring for this to be done, and as my brother was an apprentice electrician at the council, he asked if he could do the job for experience. The Chief Electrical Engineer, a friend of my dad's and Rex, who had a good working relationship with him, signed off on John's job. We had the best rewiring and best meter board ever! We repositioned the bath, installed a free standing handbasin, pink and grey tiles on the floor and grey Tilux on the walls. White frilled curtains but no room for a door! The lack of a door didn't pose any problems until we were getting visitors—a quick visit to the hardware to purchase a cheap folding door (I wonder if it is still there?) worked well.

During these renovations to the bathroom we had to break into the sewer line under the house and as the bath was disconnected and an open drain under the house, the sewer main had blocked somewhere and all the sewerage ended up under our house, not a dead animal! It was trapped there as between each pier was a cement wall. Rex had to break one wall, dig a trench across the footpath and clean out the road gutter so it could drain away. In the same time frame, one Sunday while turning the water on/off at the main tap to do the plumbing, he managed to screw the main shutoff valve out of the water supply, creating a huge geyser at the front gate. When the Water Board man came and advised us he would have to dig up the road and that would cost us dearly. While he went to get help from another employee, who was playing bowls, Rex managed to get the valve back in against the pressure. Someone was looking after us that day. We were so scared as we had the new bath sitting just inside the front door. I sat crying on a chair trying to hide the bath—we should have had a licensed plumber to do the job. The Water Board bought us Phenyl and Lime to spread under the house after we informed them about the sewer blockage.

This was the end of our disasters all while trying to save money and do the jobs ourselves.

After finishing his Accountancy Certificate, Rex, my mum and dad enrolled in Homecraft Woodwork at Cessnock Tech. Mum built my linen press and sewing cupboard, dad built our wardrobes and Rex our Cane Bar which he lined with the old floor boards from the kitchen and he covered it with bamboo. We spent weekends cutting it from Maitland river banks.

After realizing that the garden across the front wasn't full of Lilies, Freesias and Snowdrops but Onion Weed, we dug down deep, filled the holes with newspapers and black plastic. My dad leant us his car and trailer so we could buy a trailer load of pebbles for \$1 from Melville Ford near Maitland. We had to stop lots of times to scrape the pebbles away from the sides so the wheels didn't rub on the mudguards. (we had our \$1's worth). Other times we went and collected big rocks from the along the newly formed road to Keinbah, for our new 'rock garden'. We built a new front fence with a concrete mowing strip and our own 'homemade' concrete blocks. (I had a miscarriage after all this, and note: the concrete blocks are still under the front fence 2025.)

The outside walls were in too bad a state to paint, so we covered them in a brand new product—Alcover. We chose Dove Grey Aluminum weatherboards which was rolled out to the correct length without any joins. A new fresh home on three sides as we had plans to extend the back, plus build a laundry all under the one roof. My laundry consisted of



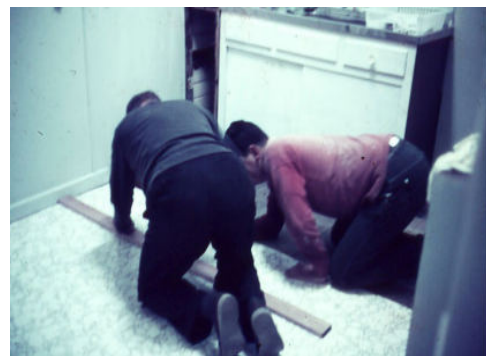
Our 'Bestman' - on the washing wall.
1st pink, -then blue. Colours are true!

a tub next to the new gas stove in the kitchenette and mum's twin tub Lightburn outside near the yard sink.

We put Feltex in the 2 bedrooms, two donated carpet squares in the lounge and dining room, vinyl in the kitchen. All the walls were eventually painted, we made a very comfortable cosy home.

We were very fortunate, we were the first of all our friends to get married, so we had heaps of help with our renovations as long as I fed them and there was a game of cards after tea.

* * *



The Hole from fuel fires

My dad and Rex—measuring the vinyl for the kitchen floor



Rex's dad, was the painter, even having to warming the paint tins on the stove hotplates.



Bathroom renovations



Our home just before we sold. 1970. The drain across the footpath can still be seen after 3 years!



2006 - note: no chimney in lounge room



39 Church Street—2025

The people who bought our home in 1970, said it was the coldest home they had lived in, apparently because the Aluminum wasn't insulated even though it was installed over the weatherboards.

MY 2 x GREAT GRANDPARENT'S HOME Westgate, Southwell, Nottingham, England

Among our treasured family photos is one taken in 1891 at the back of the home showing my GG grandfather (widower) seated with three sons standing, daughter-in-law seated and servant to the left. The small child held by his father, is my grandmother's brother.

GG grandfather's occupation was ironmonger owning two shops. He was a warden at Holy Trinity Church situated close by where there is a brass plaque acknowledging his service.

My cousin in England and I have had an interesting time scrolling along Westgate on Google Earth maps attempting to match up the street view of the house from the style and design with our photograph. We were able to access a 1900 map of Southwell that helped identify the property.

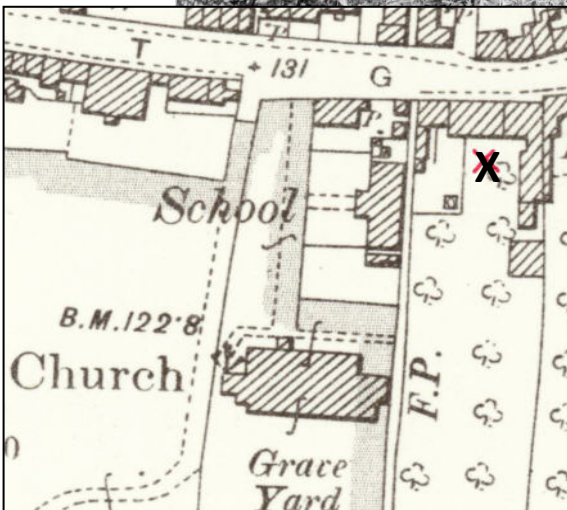
The family must have occupied an extensive part of the building as after GG grandfather died in 1895 his effects went to auction (as per newspaper records) with instructions to sell the whole of the valuable household furniture, linen, glass, china, pictures etc. comprising the contents of dining and drawing rooms, entrance hall and four bedrooms and including a well made drawing room suite in walnut and crimson velvet, a small carved old oak centre table, a carved oak desk on stand dated 1658, a finely carved oak chest, a full compass pianoforte in mahogany case, two mahogany hall chairs, carved oak side table, a polished ash bedroom suite, Tudor and French bedsteads, spring mattresses, bed linen etc. also the kitchen and scullery effects.

My cousin has visited the area and walked past the house which is now divided into three residences. The lovely back garden no longer exists but there is a pathway through to the churchyard.

Lesley - Member No: 11



GG grandfather and family in the back garden - Westgate, Southwell



69-71 Westgate marked with X



69-71 Westgate, Southwell, Nottingham

Home Sweet Home

When I was small, on Saturday mornings, like the Major General in Gilbert and Sullivan's "Pinafore" I "polished up the handle on the big front door" and then the nameplate for the house, TALCAI. What that name meant I have never discovered, but I will never forget it! We lived in one of a row of semis, all proudly displaying their names on the front wall behind the cast-iron railing. Other house names are often much easier to relate to especially the much maligned EMORUO, ITLLDO, DUNROVIN or COSTA MOTZA.

Some combine the names of the owners or give proof to the family historian of the original area they or their ancestors migrated from – AIRDRIE was the Eagleson family home in Sydney. The early electoral rolls often included the house name in the address, so this can be a good source of speculation or information. Other names might incorporate a place name important to the occupants' lives – for instance my parents named the house they built COOERWULL after the place they met. Others again combine the names of the occupants, using surnames or Christian names. Seeing we already live in Number 42, which according to Douglas Adams is the answer to Life, the Universe and Everything, it is impossible to find a house name to top that.



Doo Town in Tasmania has made its house names a tourist attraction since the 1930s, with many nameplates incorporating DOO – such as DOO LITTLE, XANADOO, DO US and WEE DOO. Perhaps Tea Gardens could have TEA FOR TWO, or BUSHHELLS, TWININGS and TEAPOT! TEACOSY sounds attractive, too.

Shirley Member No: 6

Why have a house name? -

Queensland State Library state:-

House names could identify a house in a time when numbering had not been introduced. It was helpful for an owner to retain the house name at a new address because the link between the owner and his home was already familiar. The name usually had happy associations, so it was comfortable and practical for the name to move with them. House numbering became more common during the 1950s, and so house names, which were neither compulsory nor pervasive, fell into disuse.

If there was no house name it was a matter of identifying a home by the owner describing what it was near, such as a tram stop, train station, shop or another well-known landmark, or stating how many houses down the street it was.

Our home in Sutherland was called 'Girraween', my dad said it meant 'place of many flowers' and it certainly was in our case, a yard full of Dahlias.

THE HOUSE AT 5 WITT STREET TEA GARDENS

The house was bought by my parents Doris and John Ringland on the 17th January 1934 for 175 pounds. Grace Battram, wife of James Battram was the vendor. James died on 24th September 1933 and is buried at Tea Gardens Cemetery.

Initially the land had been bought by Eliza Engel 4th November 1908 from the AA Company—5 acres of land more or less for 25 pounds.

On the 11th February 1921, James bought the land from Eliza Engel, wife of Gustav Engel—noted oyster lessee.

The land was part of a subdivision of Lot 39 of the AA Companies Estate. James paid 190 pounds for the land.

How did this house arrive? It was brought from Bulahdelah!

On the transfer deeds James Battram was noted to be an Engine Driver. He worked on the Allen Taylor Droghers. I think the house must have been dismantled and carried down to Tea Gardens by drogher, as was the timber at that time.

From the Dungog Chronicle 13/7/1917, it was noted the road between Bulahdelah and Tea Gardens was barely opened for horse traffic. The Port Stephens Pilot stated in the near future the road from Tea Gardens to Bulahdelah, which is only 15-20 miles. On the 16/7/1926 the distance turned out to be 18 miles.

On 18/11/1922 -James bought sawn timber from the local mill at Windy Woppa for 3 guineas, more on 12/5/1923 for 14 shillings and on 17/4/1924 15 shillings worth. James was known to help a neighbour in Witt Street who was building a house. That house was demolished in 2006 and he must have had some building skills to reconstruct this house.

The ceilings have been lowered using masonite, the original plaster ceiling is still in place but worse for age. Originally there were two bedrooms, a lounge, a separate dining room with an open fireplace. The fuel stove in the kitchen shared the same chimney. Some of the exterior walls are now interior where additions have been added. The bull nosed verandah was replaced by a wrap around verandah, which was partly built to provide extra bedrooms.

When I retired I returned to this house in the mid 1990s, my parents had lived here since the 1930s. My husband was a clever handyman, so we adapted the house to suit. The kitchen wall was removed and the bathroom relocated. A new garage replaced the shed.

When the frangipani flowers give up after summer, the camelias take over for winter, which they have been doing as long as I can remember.

* * *



5 Witt Street, Tea Gardens in 2025

MY OLD FAMILY HOME

I was fortunate to live in the same house growing up with my parents and two older sisters. As you can see by the photo it was a very solid brick home with a veranda across the front and extending down one side of the house. It had a lovely bay window in my parents bedroom with a window seat which I loved to sit on and look out the window. It had a driveway down the side leading to a garage in the back corner of the block. The driveway also lead you to a second entry which allowed for the property to be divided into two residence's.



I didn't know until I started doing my family research on my maternal side that I discovered that my nanna after marrying for the second time purchased the property with her husband sometime between 1925-1930 according to census records. That means my mother who would have been aged between 6-11 years old would have also been living in this house as a young girl. The 1933 census records show my nanna living at Anzac Pde Sydney which tells me they must have rented out the house. Unfortunately my mother's step father passed away in 1934 when my mother was just 15 years old. The 1943 census shows both my mother and nanna living at 41 Arthur St Sydney. It wasn't until my mother married in 1949 that she returned to the family home with her mother and husband where she started to raise a family of her own.

In the early days my nanna lived in the smaller section of the house. As my mother's family grew I think that is when my nanna moved to Coogee to free up one of the bedrooms as my eldest sister was getting older needing more space as it was a very tight fit with 3 girls in the one bedroom. I continued to share that bedroom with my other sister until my eldest sister got married and then I was very happy to move into her old room the following day. I continued living in this house until my wedding. A few years later my other sister was married and left my parents empty nesters. My father passed away in 1980 and it was not long after that the property was sold after being in the family in one form or another for over 55 years.

During the time that my parents owned the property, the neighbouring property came up for sale. My parents purchased the neighbouring property and proposed to build units over the two blocks. At the time there was a lot of opposition with neighbouring properties which forced my parents to eventually sell the second property. As with a lot of areas you can't stop progress and after the family sold the property it wasn't long before our lovely old family home was knocked down and units were built on the site. I was so pleased that my father was never aware that the units were finally built.

I have been researching my family history since 2012 and I have gathered a lot of information on a lot of my ancestors and family members. It has been amazing writing this story for our newsletter that I realised that every picture tells a story. Family Trees hold a lot of personal information with names and dates but that doesn't always tell the true story of how our ancestors ended up where they were and why. Hope this story gives you some inspiration to look a little deeper than just skin deep. WE NEED TO LOOK AT ALL ASPECTS OF THE WHO, WHERE AS WELL AS THE WHY.



Ros -Member No: 23.

MY CHILDHOOD HOMES:

I had three 'homes' of which I have memories. I believe when I was born my parents were living in a private hotel (common in 1948 for those who had come here post WW2), but my parents then moved to a flat in a converted mansion in Waverton, Sydney. I have a few memories of that time, and my father, from about 1949-1951 when he deserted us Xmas 1951 when my sister was a bub, and it was my mother who coped for another 2 years alone - no family, no government assistance in those days....always with the threat her children being taken from her. My Polish Mum had been a refugee nurse in Anders Army (Polish division of British Army) after escaping Siberian labour Camp. She ended the war in India and my parents married for convenience and my father brought her back to Australia in 1947..... Why and how is another story!

Mum then worked as a private nurse and became friends with White Russian doctors here in Australia. It was they who assisted her in 1953 with obtaining our new home. In those days Nursing Homes and Private Hospitals were governed by the Nursing fraternity and decided who became managers or owners of same. I believe Mum was the first non-Aussie nurse to be granted the opportunity! This was because the previous Matron had abandoned her lease leaving unattended patients in need of care. Mum immediately packed a small suitcase with clothes and toys leaving everything else in the Waverton flat and immediately took over the business. My sister was 2 yrs old and I, 4yrs old. I remember that arrival.... we wore fancy hand-made dresses (by Mum) of white sort of nylon material totally covered in pin-prick flower designs! Mum continued to pay rent on the leased Waverton flat for some time but when she went back to clear it out squatters had moved in and sold, ruined or stolen all our possessions and the few memorabilia that Mum had re her Polish family. That part of Poland where she was born was invaded by Communist Russia September 1939 and when she was taken prisoner for being a Girl Guide and a new bride for a young Polish bloke from the region. Note that this part of Poland has been Belarus since 1939! It was many years before Mum could trace what had happened to her family..



Our new home was called "Wyuna Convalescent Home" at 51 Wood Street, on the Eastern Hill Manly, NSW. It has a historysupposedly being built in mid 1800s by an early Mayor of Manly and research has divulged it had different names/uses over subsequent years...However one thing I know was that by 1924 it was known as "Wyuna Private Hospital" because my 1st mother-in-law was born there that year! We lived at Wyuna from 1953-1960. We resided in conjoined fibro rooms out the back of the main building alongside five timber rooms supposedly earlier used as staff quarters. Our kitchen was the hospital kitchen; our dining room the staff dining room; our bathroom shared with staff.

The toilet (full of redback spiders) was out the back of the main old building next to a huge old gunny sack in which we collected old newspapers.

The laundry with copper and mangle used to wash the hospital linen was also our only laundry. The back garden was elevated, rocky and tiny - where we had a metal rocking sea-saw also used as a pirate ship by my sister and I, and was where we had the washing line - stuck over a rocky cliff great for swinging around on! ... something modern parents would be horrified by - but we loved it. From 4yrs old I helped Mum by carrying bedpans and urinals to the pan room and as I grew older I helped feed some of the residents Learned much re old Aussie life as I chatted to these old folk .



Those were the primary school days, that when school was out you left home on your scooters after brekky and were told to be home by tea time! Most of our time was spent roaming North Head bush (where we weren't supposed to be) - long days on Little Manly Beach stepping over the coke from the gas works (worse than bindis!), stomping on live sharks the local fishing guys hauled in, collecting and cooking periwinkles off the rocks, rowing in little wooden dingies out to greet the Manly ferries and having to get out and kick our way home because we hadn't the strength to row when the wind changed - climbing around the rocks to visit Store Beach (part of the Quarantine Station and not allowed) or exploring "Collins Flat" Beach which was totally polluted by whatever greasy stuff came down from the buildings from the old structures on North Head.

Our area was mostly populated by working class residents. Mum employed local ladies as cooks and (we and the patients ate like kings) and Nursing staff - training them to her high standards of care. Their children became our friends and school mates who attended Manly Public School or St Mary's Catholic School. Religious or ethnic origins were never an issue with us kids and in my latter primary school years we took an influx of European refugees in school as par for the course (we just didn't know whilst we were skinny 11yr olds our new school mates were bosomy 15yr olds already promised in marriage and who never got to high school but were married off instead)!



The front view of Wyuna with Jenny's mums new Morris Minor



1999 Wyuna was transformed into Manly Cove Guest House. Permission: Northern Beaches Library Local Studies

The only time my sister and I, who were brought up totally Aussie, and had a taste of our Polish heritage was at Xmas and Easter when Mum brought out her treasured ornaments. The Home had a huge entry vestibule and marble heritage desk. Every Xmas she would have a tall section cut down from the tree in our front yard. It was mounted on the desk and decorated in the Polish tradition. In the early years I remember real candles and cotton wool for snow Locals just used to come to site-see Mum's tree and were always welcome! At Easter we were taught how to "suck eggs" and decorate same. Have you ever heard the saying "Don't teach your grandmother how to suck eggs" and wondered what it meant?

I have many more memories of this era Perhaps I can relate them in further issues of our newsletter.

In 1960 Mum finally bought our first real house at 73 Stuart St, Manly, down the next block over-looking the old Gas Works and Sydney Harbour.....But that's another story. Mum continued to own and run the Nursing Home until 1973. By then I was a Registered Nurse (trained in the old way at Manly Hospital), married, expecting my 1st child and working to assist her wind up the business and relocate the remaining patients.

Have some knowledge what happened to "Wyuna" in the following years. They say it's been restored - At least I still have some of the marble which once was a feature of this beautiful (should have been heritage) building ... My childhood home.

Jenny - Member No: 33



Copied with permission from 'Nanna-on-the-road' Gaye Dandridge

Yesteryear

As I walked among the ruins
From a time of yesteryear
I wonder if the family lived on hope
Or maybe more on fear

Did they pray for the rains to come
And fill the creek with water
Or did they plan the wedding
Of their cherished eldest daughter.

Were they dreaming of the price they'd get
When they sold the sheep at market.
Or hoping for a bumper crop
To enjoy a healthy harvest.

The days were long and hot out here
For the once pale English brides
But they made the most of their new home
And took life in their stride.

So as I walk amongst the ruins
Of these once cosy homes
I think about the people who
This arid place did roam.

By Gaye Dandridge



"Lest We Forget"

This large mural in Anzac Park, was a collaborative effort between the Myall Riverside Art Walk Committee, Tea Gardens RSL Sub-Branch and 18 volunteer students and staff from Tea Gardens Public School in 2009



MORE ABOUT TEA GARDENS HAWKS NEST PIONEER PEOPLE



Pioneer poles for Engel and Motum families—located next to the Tea Gardens Library carpark

THE ENGEL FAMILY

From the time of the earliest settlement in the 1820s, the Myall River provided the only link to the outside world for the villagers, hamlets and farms scattered from Bungwahl at the northern most part to Port Stephens on the south.

In the early days, there were timber getters, saw millers, fishermen and farmers all eking out a living in this isolated region, raising families under the most difficult circumstances.

One such family who we touch on very briefly is the Engel family.

George Peter Engel emigrated from Frankfurt am Main, Germany, arriving in Port Jackson aboard the *Harmony* in 1849. He married Josephine Louise Diehl, who had arrived from Strasbourg France in 1850 in the German Church in Sydney January 1852. George worked as a carpenter/builder and after their first son, John Alexander was born in March 1853 they decided to move to Port Stephens.

When the AA Company released land east of the Myall River in the Parish of Fens in the 1830s some years were to elapse before any settlers moved into the area. George Peter and family, were among the early arrivals in the mid 1850s, settling first at Swan Bay and then purchasing a property they called 'The Fens' on the Myall River, north of Hawks Nest. They started a vegetable farm but because of the poor sandy soil, the venture was not a great success. Between 1858-1866 the family had grown to 5 boys.

The Engel family changed to raising cattle which they slaughtered in their own abattoir located at 'Ti-Tree Ridge' near 'Engel's Reach' on the Myall River. They delivered meat by row boat to the widely dispersed settlers of the Port Stephens-Myall Lakes region.

The brothers all married and started their own families.

George Adolph (3rd son known as Adolph) born 15th July 1861 married Emily Jane Zeininger at the Church of England church in Seaham on the 18 December 1883. Adolph and his brother Willie set themselves up in business, preparing and still delivering meat by rowing boats, to the residents of Tea Gardens and as far afield as Port Stephens. This marked the beginning of a commercial dynasty known as GA Engel & Sons lasting until the 1950s.

To make it easier for the children to attend school, the family moved to a rented home in Tea Gardens in about 1893. Adolph continued to operate the business as a butcher for the small village of Tea Gardens from The Fens. They built and moved into their first shop and adjacent house. In 1922 he built a larger brick store alongside the original shop. Not content with just land-based trading, Adolph established a regular 'store-boat' operation on the water serving settlers around the Myall and lake systems.

To provide the river service, several boats were either constructed or purchased. Twice a week these little boats steamed up through the lake system to Bungwahl, then Pindimar, Nelson Bay, Soldiers Point, Tanilba, Swan Bay, Karuah, Allworth and many places in between. On board each ship there was the skipper, usually a senior member of the family who knew the shoals and sand pits well, an engineer who manned the engine room and stoked the fires. George and Emily's eleven children tended the store on board each boat supplying the goods requested. In the tough times of the depression, the Engel firm provided the essentials for existence to many river-folk, whether they could pay or not.

As the trade grew a number of store boats were commissioned into the service, *Reliance*, *Kate Thompson*, *Nepean*, and a diesel powered *Yalinbah*. To provide a shipping link to Sydney, the Engels either built or purchased several ocean-going ships, *Myall River*, *Coweambah* and the *Iluka*, which ran aground in a violent storm and the remains can still be seen from the shore. The best remembered is the *Coweambah* which provided a weekly service to Newcastle transporting sawn timber, shell grit and passengers and returning with stock for the Universal Store.

The family business prospered until WWII when the *Coweambah*, their principal ship was commandeered for war service by the government. No compensation was received for this ship. The *Coweambah* was not to perish in battle and her war duties ended in 1945. She was returning home to Sydney when fate overtook her.

.....cont.

She was sheltered off one of the northern rivers of NSW when a gale sprang up and she dragged anchor and capsized in the surf with a loss of one life. *The Yalinbah* was sold to a NSW sugar company and saw service on the Clarence River.

George Adolph and Emily had 12 children, 4 boys and 8 girls, the last little girl Bertha, only survived 1 day. George Adolph died 13th March 1918 and Emily Jane on 11 September 1946. They are buried at Tea Gardens Cemetery along with many other Engel family members.

There is so much more story of the Engel family who have contributed so much to our twin towns. Leslie Fredrick Engel as proprietor of the local hall, built in 1924, provided entertainment with the showing of silent movies. Using his generator for power as the electricity didn't arrive until 1939.

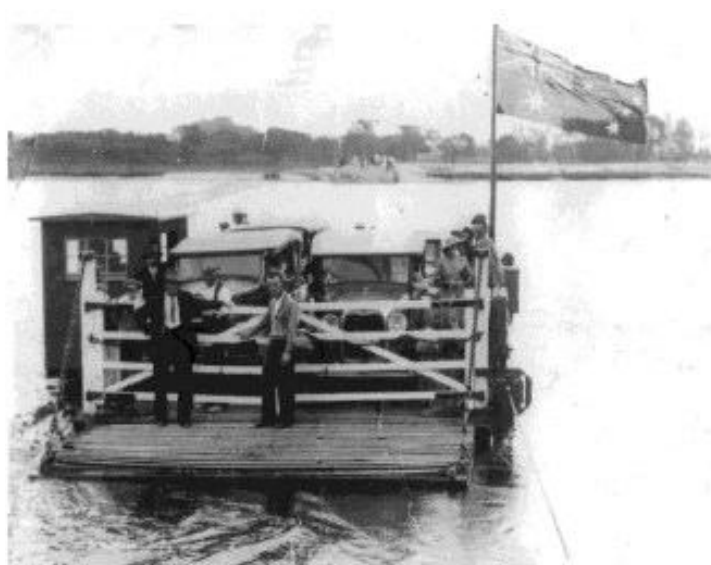
G.A. Engel & Sons went into voluntary liquidation in 1947. The Yalinbah was sold to a sugar company on the Clarence River in 1943 when the store boat service ceased. She later became derelict and was burnt on an island near Yamba.



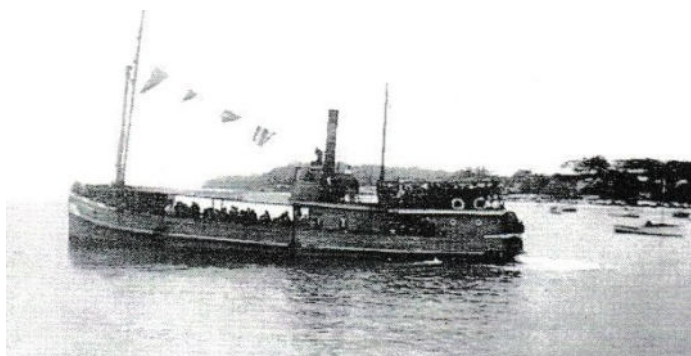
The home of Leslie Fredrick Engel—97 Marine Drive TG.



Engel's Guesthouse "Homeville" Cnr. Hough & Myall Street TG



Henry Melvin Engel put the wire cable across the Myall River in 1927 for the vehicular ferry from Tea Gardens to Hawks Nest. In it's later years , the ferry was unable to meet the demand, resulting in waiting times of up to six hours to make a crossing during holiday peak times.



SS Coweambah—At Christmas decked out with flags, a piano and stall, she would travel throughout the Myall Lakes to pick up passengers for the Annual Mungo Brush Regatta.



The "*Nepean*" towing the ferry across for it's first trip.

G. A. ENGEL & SONS

The well-known firm of G. A. Engel & Sons informs the public in this issue that all their requirements can be met when a visit is paid to Tea Gardens. Their business is almost as ' old as the town itself.

No effort has been spared to develop the locality and to satisfy local residents and tourists.

Engels supply everything — groceries, bread, meat, drapery, men's and boy's wear; in fact, everything from the proverbial needle to the anchor.

Visitors:- can phone Tea Gardens 2, and the order will be ready on arrival.



Adolph Engel's first General Store 1888



G.A Engel's 2nd store



G.A. Engel & Son Universal Store - demolished after 2007



Caravan Park office & Engel's store on the right



Reference from:

[Trove.nla.gov.au/search](https://trove.nla.gov.au/search).

Pioneers & History of the Myall River & Lakes—Janis Winn

Tea Gardens—Hawks Nest & Northern Port Stephens—Brian Engel, Janis Winn, John Wark

Ebb & Flow Book—Myall Historical Soc.—Tea Gardens Hawks Nest Family Research

Tea Gardens Cemetery and private photos.